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H U R R I S H

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A STUDY

BY


THE HON. EMILY LAWLESS

AUTHOR OF 'A CHELSEA HOUSEHOLDER,'
'A MILLIONAIRE'S COUSIN'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXXVI



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HURRISH: A STUDY.



CHAPTER I.

IN GORTNACOPPIN VALLEY.

MR O'BRIEN was standing beside the lake, with his eyes fixed upon the surface. The poor man had been busy all day at different points of the estate, and had brought away a tolerably severe heartache from each. There were some labourers at that very moment employed in clearing out a ditch not far off, whom he visited punctiliously from time to time. He was his own steward as well as his own agent, maintaining, not unreasonably, that a property which could hardly

pay its own expenses could still more forcibly not afford to be encumbered with a burden of annuitants. It was a gallant resolution, but it had been a bitter one to carry out, and the source too of some of his worst unpopularity. Labourers ! Who that knows Ireland but has a responsive groan to offer upon the altar of that topic ? Poor Mr O'Brien had expended many groans, but they had not been very fruitful ones. To obtain a fair day's work in return for a fair day's wage, was a feat which he had set all his pride and all his powers of will to accomplish. He had argued, pleaded, bribed, had done everything that man could do to procure that end. Needless to say, he had been beaten at every point. He had given up the contest now. He employed fewer men than formerly, but those few had as comfortable and satisfactory a time as any set of "labourers" within the four seas. Whereas, formerly, he had been rather given to surprising offenders,—pouncing upon them at unexpected moments, and from unlooked-for points,—now, on the

contrary, he was careful to make known his approach by loud coughs and other unmistakable signals. He was rewarded by invariably finding a magnificent display of industry whenever he approached—every man plunging his spade into the soil with a sort of desperation, as if a bet of a thousand pounds, at least, depended upon his individual industry.

At the sound of hoofs clattering up the avenue he looked round with an air of surprise, and a frown came to his forehead when he perceived his visitor.

Mr Higgins, however, gave him no time to speak. He dashed at once into the thick of the subject.

“I am sorry to be obliged to—ar—trouble you, Mr O’Brien,” he said, reining in his horse beside him, and speaking in a tone of formality. “But I have come upon a matter of—*business*,”—the emphasis upon the last word was very emphatic.

Mr O’Brien bowed, and stood waiting to hear what the business was.

“There has been, I—ar—regret to say, an atrocious crime, a—ar—murder, perpetrated within my district, and—Mr Cavanagh being at Limerick—I am obliged to come to you as the nearest magistrate for a warrant for the arrest of the—ar—criminal.”

Another murder! Mr O'Brien fell back a step or two, and gazed upon his informant with a face of horror. “Who is it?” he said, hoarsely.

“A man of the name of Brady—a tenant, I believe, of your own.”

There was a discernible note of triumph, for Mr Higgins had not forgotten their last conversation. Mr O'Brien, however, only heard the fact itself.

“Good God!” he said, below his breath; and then “Good God!” again. “The man is dead, you say?”

“Stone dead. I left the body where it was found, and expect to find the coroner there upon my return. The place is a—ar—valley about two miles from here.”

Mr O'Brien turned away. The indifferent

officialism of the other's tone jarred upon him. "Good God! Good God!" he repeated over and over inwardly. He had begun to lull himself into a sort of half belief that matters were really at last beginning to mend, and here now was a fresh crime, and at his very door. He forgot that the other man was waiting—forgot everything but the fact itself. It had been a common enough occurrence for him to have got "used," perhaps, as people say, to it, but who ever really succeeds in getting "used" to such incidents? His horror was not quite impersonal either. It was *he* who had put this man Brady into that farm for the occupying of which he had doubtless met his death. Against advice too he had done it. Hurrish's words, "There'll be bad wark—the divil's *own* bad wark!" came back vividly to his mind. The devil's own work, indeed! Was the country given over then to devils? Were they all in a league together? Was there never, *never* to be an end of these horrors which blackened the very name of Irishman?

“What did you say about wanting a warrant against some one ; who is it ?” he inquired, turning eagerly to Mr Higgins, whose face expressed his ill-restrained impatience.

“A man called—ar—O’Brien,—Hurrish O’Brien.”

The other man also called O’Brien fell back, and stared at the inspector with an air of stupefaction. “Nonsense !” he exclaimed at last, indignantly. “Hurrish O’Brien ! Nonsense ! Impossible !”

Mr Higgins stiffened his chin. “It is the man’s own brother who has given the evidence,” he said.

“What man’s brother ?”

“The murdered man’s.”

“’Tis a lie then, whoever says it ! Why, I’ve known Hurrish O’Brien ever since he was that high. He would be as incapable of killing a man in cold blood as I should myself !”

Mr Higgins shrugged his shoulders. “Let us hope it—ar—is so,” he said. “In the meanwhile the evidence seems to me to be of a—ar—very serious character. May I

trouble you to sign this warrant. You will see that it is ready filled up. Allow me to offer you a stilo."

Mr O'Brien took no notice of the stilo. "I tell you, I totally disbelieve in Hurrish O'Brien having anything to say to it," he said angrily.

Mr Higgins smiled serenely.

"*Totally* disbelieve in it, do you hear?" the other repeated.

Mr Higgins smiled again. "You will scarcely decline to sign the warrant upon that account, I—ar—presume?" he said significantly.

It was the wrong note to strike. This insistent officialism was exactly calculated to set Mr O'Brien's pride bristling at once.

"On the contrary, that is precisely what I *do* decline to do," he said curtly. "If upon further examination the man is found to be guilty,—which I totally disbelieve,—there will be plenty of time to arrest him then. If not—as I am convinced will turn out to be the case—the Government will be

spared another blunder brought upon it by the zeal of its officials. I decline to sign a warrant for the committal of a man whom I believe to be as innocent as myself."

Mr Higgins was genuinely incapable of answering. New as he was to this work, he was an official to the backbone, and that any one would refuse an official demand was an idea which had never entered into his imagination.

"You—ar—decline!" he exclaimed, in a tone of stupefaction.

"Emphatically. I wish you good morning, Mr Higgins; you will excuse me,—my men are waiting for me in the next field," and away walked Mr O'Brien across the grass.

To describe Mr Higgins's feelings as he rode back with the still unsigned warrant in his pocket, would be beyond my powers. The refusal was in his eyes rather a grosser violation of law, if anything, than the murder itself. Refuse to sign a warrant! Refuse to support the authority of the constabulary! The man must be *mad*. There could be no

other explanation ! It is true that it was not necessary, in strict law, to obtain a magistrate's warrant before arresting a supposed criminal,—the constabulary being perfectly free to do so without one. They did it in that case, however, at their own risk, and there had not been wanting cases lately where such an excess of zeal had been rewarded with anything but comfortable consequences. On the whole, therefore, he decided, though against his will, to delay taking any further steps until Mr Cavanagh's return from Limerick, which was fortunately expected that very evening. But if this fellow O'Brien took the opportunity of escaping in the meanwhile ? Mr Higgins's feeling was that in that case his namesake ought to be tried, and if necessary hanged, in his place !

By the time he got back a much larger crowd had collected in the amphitheatre,—the news of the deed having spread with the rapidity with which such news seems invariably endowed. It had awakened

some excitement and more curiosity, so that gradually every one belonging to Tubamina, with the exception of those away at Ballyvaughan for the fair, had gathered around the spot. To none did the news come with more startling surprise than to the very men who, as will be remembered, had undertaken that duty themselves, but had been prevented by a succession of such accidents as will occur even in the best regulated societies. Andy Holohun was at first disposed to give the credit of the achievement to Peter O'Flanagan, and Peter O'Flanagan to Andy Holohun. When, upon further inquiries, passed rapidly from mouth to mouth and ear to ear, it turned out that neither of these heroes could claim the credit, the perplexity and excitement deepened perceptibly. As for Hurrish O'Brien, no one at first even thought of him. He had put up with Mat Brady's provocations so long, that his patience had become a sort of local proverb; and although at the drawing of lots it had been arranged that the

lot should fall upon him, it had been more a sort of support to other backsliders, than from the slightest expectation that he would really undertake the office. When, therefore, it became known that Maurice Brady had actually denounced him, and had demanded that a warrant should be taken out against him, a thrill of genuine excitement ran through the whole assembly. Every one liked Hurrish; every one was aware of the sum of indebtedness which Maurice Brady owed to him. Murder is a trifle, but ingratitude of this sort is a crime which strikes with the fullest possible effect upon an Irish imagination.

Long before the coroner had arrived measures had been taken to warn Hurrish. A boy had been secretly despatched to Ballyvaughan, to let him know what was on foot, so that if he decided to escape he could do so, or at any rate could keep out of the way until after the coroner had sat. When that important official at last appeared upon the scene, there was a general slipping away

on the part of all the men present, none of whom particularly desired being called upon to serve on the jury. It was not, therefore, without some difficulty and considerable delay that the necessary dozen demanded by the law were secured, and marched down the hill under the charge of an escort of police.

A wilder, more essentially law-defying dozen were rarely perhaps gathered together at the command of the law. Some of the men looked scared; others fierce and excited; others again sullen and indifferent; while some, including the two recreants Andy Holohun and Peter O'Flanagan, were evidently rather pleased and tickled by the whole proceeding. Not a few of the jurymen were in absolute rags, — tatterdemalion loafers at the corners of the street, and hangers-on upon the charity of others. Several were very old men, wearing the knee-breeches and tail-coats of a generation ago, amongst whom was our old acquaintance Phil Rooney, who had been attracted like others to the scene, and been promptly pounced upon

as a “dacent” man, less likely than others to give a verdict in direct opposition to the evidence. No intelligence or educational qualification, however, is required in a jury of this kind. Indeed poor Thady-na-Taggart was one of the original dozen, and only escaped by taking to his heels, and starting across the rocks at a pace which the official who had secured him did not see his way to imitating.

When all were collected, they were marched down to take up their places at the bottom of the amphitheatre, where the coroner, Mr Higgins, and Maurice Brady were already assembled,—the constabulary, who had by this time been recruited by others from a more distant barracks, keeping order, and preventing the crowd from pressing too closely upon the group around the body.

A strange scene truly!—characteristic of people, country, times! On one side the dozen unwilling ministers of the law—whole-coated or ragged-coated, as the case might be; on the other the coroner, a stout little man in a suit of rusty black, with a pock-

marked, dim-complexioned face, imperceptible nose, and air of vulgar importance. Beside him Mr Higgins, stiff and thick-set, stolid English officialism stamped upon every line of his heavy-featured, commonplace face. A little way off, in marked contrast to these two, Maurice Brady, tall, slight, and erect, his arms crossed upon his chest, his pale handsome face and resolute disdainful air giving him rather the aspect of some political prisoner—an Emmet or a Wolfe Tone—at the bar of his country's enemies. Behind, and as a background to these, the wild helter-skelter crowd of idlers and lookers-on—women with blue cloaks, bare feet, ragged red petticoats; old hags, be-wrinkled and hideous; half-naked boys, who skipped about, active as goats, amongst the rocks, and were with difficulty restrained by the police. Every now and then some fresh figures would appear over the edge of the basin, hurrying eagerly down to the scene below. After its long ages of idleness and vacancy, the amphitheatre had at last

vindicated its existence. It was a theatre indeed to-day ! a theatre brimming over with eager spectators. Ledge above ledge, rock over rock, the rows of wild, excited faces rose one above the other—the sun streaming in sleepy oblique bands over the whole, a few astonished sheep or goats showing their white, impassive faces here and there amongst the crowd.

After a little delay the examination began. Maurice Brady was the first witness.

Questioned by the coroner. “The deceased is your brother?”

“Yes.”

“When did you see him last alive?”

“Four days since.”

“He was then in his ordinary health?”

“Yes.”

“Have you reason to think that your brother was upon bad terms with any one?”

“I have.”

“With whom?”

“With Hurrish O’Brien.”

At this answer, given in a clear distinct

tone, a sudden murmur ran through the crowd,—a low buzz of anger, indignation, contempt. A thrill of excitement passed through Maurice Brady. It was the first note of popular displeasure he had ever heard! It nerved him for the moment, however, rather than daunted. “Fools! did they suppose he cared a haporth about *their* opinions,” he thought contemptuously.

The examination continued. Was it in consequence of his brother having taken the farm from which the Maloneys had been evicted that he and O’Brien had quarrelled?

To this, rather to the surprise of some of the hearers, the witness answered “No.”

Questioned further whether he had ever received any warnings that his brother was in danger? Answered, “Yes.” “Was the person he was in danger from Hurrish O’Brien?” Answered, “Yes.” Questioned who had given him that information? Answered—nothing.

His examination was then suspended while the other witnesses were called. The first

was one of the constabulary, who deposed to having been told by a boy who was passing the barracks that a body was lying in the valley below. That he and another constable thereupon came to the place, and found the body lying as it was at present. The boy, he said, had run off, and had not been seen since, but they would no doubt be able to lay hands on him if he was required. He also deposed to finding the gun, which he produced, both barrels of which were empty.

The next witness was the dispensary doctor, who had partially examined the body previous to the arrival of the coroner. The deceased had, in his opinion, he said, died from the effects of the blow visible upon the temple. There was no gunshot wound, or other wound or concussion of any kind, so far as he had ascertained, with the exception of a slight injury to the back of the head. The blow upon the temple must have been given by a very heavy weapon, probably a hammer or a loaded stick.

Death in all probability had resulted directly from effusion of blood to the brain ; he should be able, however, he said, to form a more decided opinion on this point after the regular *post-mortem* examination. His evidence ended by his stating that so violent and so instantaneously fatal a blow could only, in his opinion, have been inflicted by an unusually powerful man.

This was practically all the evidence. There was not much delay either about the verdict: accidental death was evidently impracticable, even to the ingenuity of an Irish jury. No man, by any stretch of activity, stupidity, or ingenuity, could have given that blow on the head to himself. There was only one other alternative, therefore. The twelve men unanimously brought in an open verdict—murder against some person or persons unknown.

As soon as this business was finished, and the embodied majesty of the law had broken itself up again into its individual insignificance, four of the constabulary advanced,

lifted the body of the unfortunate Brady from the ground, laid it upon a hurdle, kept at the barracks for such purposes, and taking each a corner, bore it away uphill at a brisk walk.

The crowd fell back on all sides as it advanced through their midst. Some of the women crossed themselves, and the elder men removed their hats. The rest, including those who had just been serving on the jury, stood looking on with an air of sullen indifference. When, however, Maurice Brady followed, this indifference changed. Symptoms of anger broke out. No actual menaces were uttered, but all eyes, even those of the women, fixed themselves upon him with an expression of sudden repulsion. He was only half aware of this himself, however, as he avoided looking any one fully in the face, his chief desire being to get away from them all as quickly as possible, and to be alone.

It was a long hard climb for the four bearers, and they were obliged several times to put the hurdle down in order to rest. A couple of

men who had followed at a little distance were called to once and offered money if they would assist in the carriage, but they peremptorily declined, and turned away immediately down a side-path. When the top of the ridge was at last reached, the narrow, hemmed-in world of rocks in which they had been all this while enclosed, changed suddenly to a wide-reaching world of sea, and land, and sky, green on the side of South Clare, grey where the terraced hills of Burren stretched for miles. Tubbamina lay immediately below them, a melancholy cluster of whitewashed cabins, surrounding a squat and sordid-looking chapel; beyond lay the beautiful widely open mouth of the bay of Galway, with the long low line of coast reaching from that town to Greatman's Bay; and far, far away, over the shimmering waters of the bay, and over all the low-lying country between, the saw-edged outline of the Twelve Pins of Bennabeola rose, one behind the other, softened, made mystical, spiritualised, against a clear blue, milky-looking sky.

Land and water were so mingled, one might almost say interpenetrated, in the picture, that it was hard to say where the one began and the other ended. The stern, forbidding rocks beyond Blackhead were bathed in soft caressing sunlight, as the sea broke in green volumes along their base. At one point the water could be seen glittering far inland in a number of tiny lakes, linked together and melted into one by distance. At another, small rocks and islets — illauns, carricks, and carrick-eens — bedotted the edges of the coast, where two or three brown-sailed hookers were slowly creeping along, every sail set to catch the capricious breeze. Due west the three isles of Aran streamed across the mouth of the bay,—the two great cyclopean forts of Dun Ængus, and its brother Dun Conchobhair, even at this distance the most conspicuous features in their low, flat, tabular outline.

The descent upon the other side to that lower col or ridge upon which the Bradys'

cabin stood was another change again. They had to pass along a narrow lane, sunk deep in the rocks, through breaks in which small square fields, covered with stones, became visible. Here and there were a few scant patches of potatoes and oats, all neglected and deep in weeds. A quantity of sea-gulls were collected in screaming excitement at one spot. Crows stalked to and fro over the grass with an air of protectorship, and some large red and white cows looked up with an air of mild-eyed interest and wonder as the gloomy little procession passed them by. To them, no doubt, as to others, it was quite a cheerful and pleasing break in the uninteresting monotony of their lives.

CHAPTER II.

MAURICE'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

AT last they reached the cabin. It was unspeakably miserable,—several sizes larger than Hurrish's, but naked, bald, and dreary beyond words. Not a tree—not even the all-prevailing hawthorn; not a flower; not an attempt or a pretence of a garden; not a paling—nothing to relieve the stárk and stony air of desolation. The walls had once been whitewashed, but the big stones had long ago reasserted themselves in all directions over the surface. What remained of the whitewash was all smeared and streaked with long green and yellow weather-stains, giving it an indescribably dank, bilious, and soddened aspect. A large cow-house flanked

it on one side and a pig-sty on the other, but these symptoms of prosperity were if anything rather more filthy, rickety, and tumble-down than the original building. To Maurice this ancestral abode of his had always been a source of unspeakable discomfort, the more so that his brother was a well-to-do man, with plenty of live-stock, and even a considerable sum of money laid away in bank. To-day he hardly heeded it, however. The external aspect of things had ceased, for the time being, to produce any particular impression one way or other upon his mind.

They laid the unfortunate Mat upon his own bed, which was in the inner room. Then the policemen came out, and stood waiting. Maurice, with that ineffaceable instinct of hospitality which survives all vicissitudes, looked about for whisky, but could find none. There were three or four empty barrels lying about, and a whole mountain of empty bottles at one corner. The furniture was originally of a better quality seemingly than at Hur-

rish's house, but broken for the most part almost to splinters, as if habitually used as missiles. The fire, too, had gone out, and though the afternoon was warm, the black dismal fireplace struck a sense of chilling desolation. It seemed as if Death had seated itself in bodily presence upon the hearth.

Maurice looked round for some means of relighting it. There was no turf to be seen, however, so he went outside to the stack, which was close to the cow-house. At the door he encountered one of the two men who worked for his brother,—a big, ragged, hulking fellow, who stood staring about, his mouth half open, in idle vacancy. This man he ordered, in his usual tone of unquestionable authority, to go and fetch some turf, and make the fire up at once. The fellow waited until he had done speaking, then, suddenly turning upon him, cursed him with a hideous oath, and asked him whether he supposed that he was going to demean himself by doing anything for a — informer? turned on his heel, and so walked away.

Maurice Brady stood still as if a thunder-bolt from heaven had fallen upon him. An informer! The word seemed to echo and vibrate with brazen tongues and trumpets all about the place! The constables, finding probably that no refreshments were forthcoming after their long climb, came out, and one of them told Maurice in passing that they would be on the road by turns all that night, in case of any disturbance.

He made no answer. He was incapable of speaking. "An informer!" That was all he heard, knew, thought of. He, Maurice Brady, an *informer*! When they had gone, he stumbled back into the house, and sat down upon the first stool he met with, his head ringing with the word, a whirling noise like the rumble of machinery sounding continually in his ears.

If any one of a higher calibre even had said it, he could have borne it better. But a fellow like Lanty Bradigan! a hind, a savage, a cutter of turf and drawer of water! a

wretched ignorant creature, whom he had always swept into the very dust with his contempt! It stung him to the very pith and marrow of his bones, through his pride, through his self-respect, through everything. It seemed a foretaste, too, of other scornings and hissings which he was likely to encounter, as if fierce contemptuous fingers were being pointed at him in all directions. "An informer!" Word summing up everything that to an Irishman of his type is expressive of ignominy! Heavens and earth! *he*, Maurice Brady, to be branded as an informer!

How long he sat there he could not afterwards have told. Suddenly he came to himself with a start, and looked round. There was not a living creature there besides himself,—not a cat even, or a dog. In front the black hearth stared at him with its sickly air of conscious desolation. It had begun to grow dark, too, and the corners of the room were already deep in shadow. The door of the inner one was partially opened,

and he could see a corner of the bed and a bit of the blanket. He averted his eyes from it in quick horror—a horror which seemed to rise like some sort of foul exhalation from the ground. All the scenes of that long day rushed back upon him suddenly. He felt glued to his seat by a creeping terror, which rose and rose, until it seemed to clutch at his throat with icy hands. All his life he had prided himself upon his exceptional freedom from superstition of all sorts, but the events of the day had been against him. He had the blood of endless generations of Connaught peasants in his veins, and he found himself battling in vain against the rising demon.

The whole house was like a grave! His blood congealed, and a cold thrill of terror seemed to shoot along his spine. Alone with a corpse! He remembered his mother lying dead there in that very room: he had been only a boy at the time, still he recalled it vividly. How white and thin she had looked, poor woman, worn out with

much trouble and many tears. Suddenly a fresh terror seized him. What if she should come back to-night to look down at this step-son who had used her so brutally? His teeth chattered at the thought. A sense of other presences—intangible, invisible, terrible—filled his brain with horror, and he rose with a violent effort from his stool, resolved to escape. Nothing should induce him, he determined, to remain there a minute longer.

As he approached the door a sudden loud rap came to the other side of it. He started violently, and hesitated, then went forward after a moment and opened it.

It was no very formidable invasion! Only a couple of poor old crones, who had come up from the village, according to custom, to do the last offices for the dead man, and to offer, if his brother wished it, to spend the night in the house. The two old creatures' hideous, mumbling, bewrinkled faces were as beautiful to Maurice at that moment as if they had been a pair of white-winged seraphs.

Telling them to do whatever they chose, and to get whatever they wanted, he hastily gave them a handful of silver, took an ulster belonging to him over his arm, and, leaving the house, ran down the road with an elastic sense of escape.

It was not until he had got outside that he remembered that he had literally nowhere else to go. To return to Miltown-Malbay at that hour of the evening was impossible. There was not a house in the neighbourhood which would have consented to take him in, and had there been even, his pride would have forbidden his stooping to ask for a shelter which might have been refused. Happily the night was fine ; he could sleep anywhere, —in a cave, under a bush, in a hollow—no matter where. Suddenly he remembered a place where he had often lain out as a boy. He would go there, he resolved, and, so resolving, climbed over the nearest wall, and betook himself along a sort of cornice or ledge which extended for some distance above the line of small fields in the direction of the sea.

After about half an hour's walking he came to the place, a small pocket or hollow in the side of the ridge. It had once probably been a little lake or "corrie," but was now empty, the subterranean stream which formerly fed it having got diverted elsewhere. It was quite dry, and on the upper side a low but dense fringe of dwarf hawthorn bushes sheltered it effectually against the wind, so that even in very cold weather a man might lie here and be, comparatively speaking, warm. Maurice spread out his ulster upon the bottom of the hollow, threw himself upon it, pulling a piece over his legs, and lay down, pillowing his head on his hands.

The small patches of cultivated ground were by this time all behind, and only the rock-covered side of the landscape visible from where he lay. Far as he could see the grey stony waves of the Burren extended. He could see the thin jagged line of rocks which marked the opening to the Gortnacoppin valley, but the eye passed over it

almost without a break. A few clouds had gathered, and all round the western horizon a heavy flouncing of solemn looking purple rose above the sea. Higher up the sky was clear and almost colourless, everything seeming to be united in one clear uniform wash of grey. It was extraordinarily desolate. In the direction in which he was looking, not a house, not a moving speck, not a living thing of any sort or kind, was to be seen. You might have imagined that no foot had ever trodden the earth, no sod ever been turned, no sower ever gone forth with his hands full of the grain of the coming years. Trackless, untamable, solitary, the wide hungry-looking country sloped away to the grey, solitary, all-devouring sea.

Under ordinary circumstances Maurice Brady would hardly have noticed whether it was desolate or not. He was not particularly sensitive to external impressions, having too much to think of generally to care what sort of a landscape he was looking at. Neither did he in the least mind being alone—

as a rule preferred it—so few of the people he knew were worth being with. To-day, however, it began after a while to make an impression upon him. He wished that he could see something moving, if it were only a sheep or a cow. The cold vacant face of solitude impressed him here as the sense of unknown and unseen companionship had impressed him in the house, only in a different way. He felt chilled, nervous, forlorn, as if he had just been driven away from all human companionship—an outcast and an alien from all his kind.

The experience is probably not exceptional. Loneliness is only one word, but it covers a perfect multiplicity of sensations. Days, weeks, months of a man's own society may slide by without his often being even aware of them—without the faintest sense of loneliness coming near him. At another time a few hours is sufficient to create a feeling of alienation which seems to brand the very soul, and to carry it to the uttermost brink of despair, madness—death.

He tried to shake it off by dwelling upon other things—upon the future. But what future had he now? he asked himself bitterly. A single day, a few hours, had sufficed to bring about the ruin of all his prospects, all his hopes. He remembered how he used to lie here as a boy looking out at this same naked world of crags, pining like a young hawk in a cage for the time when he would be a man, when he would take his place in the world; planning how he would distinguish himself,—he was not very sure how, it is true, but certainly be universally praised and admired. It was almost inevitable that this train of thought should bring with it the thought of Hurrish O'Brien—Hurrish who, of all his surroundings, had alone encouraged him in these visions. He could see his face—the good-natured mouth half open with admiration and wonder; the eyes—— No, he would not see it,—he resolved he would *not*. He sprang up hastily, and, leaving his ulster behind him, mounted a few hundred steps above the

corrie, and sat down again upon the ridge, turning his face in the opposite direction.

Here the most prominent object was the Donore woods and lake which lay immediately below. The dusk was fast blurring all minor details, but he could see the outline of the lake, and the grey mass of the house with some white steps in front. A few lights shone in the upper part of the house, but the bottom was all dark and blank. He sat here a long while with his elbows upon his knees, not thinking definitely, but glooming dismally over everything. He hardly thought of Mat now. The nearer and more personal trouble was wearing away the other, as a stronger acid eats out a weaker one. His own balked ambition, his own blighted prospects, gnawed at his heart, and seemed to rise up before him like a bodily presence, and to reproach him with their changed aspects. He shivered with discomfort and bitter angry self-dissatisfaction. Then a wind arose and made it chilly upon the ridge, so that he shivered

again with cold, and after a while returned to the corrie, wrapped himself in his ulster, shut his eyes resolutely, and soon afterwards fell asleep.

He dreamed wild confused dreams—dreams of struggling and fighting, guns firing, men falling over cliffs, Mat and Hurrish fighting and struggling together, but always, somehow, Mat attacking Hurrish and trying to kill him, never the other way. Then he dreamed that he was in a boat alone, he did not know where, but the motion was very strange,—not like that of a boat, more as if he were being carried along over rough ground. All at once he was struggling in the water, only it was not water at all, but sand, like the sands at Miltown-Malbey,—great yellow waves of sand blown by the wind, passing one over the other, and engulfing him horribly in their depths. Again and again he tried to escape, but the more he tried the more they swept down upon him, and rolled him over and over, and filled his mouth, and his ears, and

his nostrils, and he sank down deeper and deeper, and there was a noise as of mill-wheels, and it was all dark and horrible, and like a grave. Then he dreamt that he saw a coracle coming, with a bright white light fastened in the middle of it, and in the coracle sat his mother and Hurrish and Alley. And Alley screamed when she saw him, and hid her face ; and his mother screamed too, and told him to be gone. But Hurrish jumped into the sand and tried to pull him out, but the sand held him fast, and he could not get loose ; it was like pitch, —as fast as he got free in one place he was seized in another. And all at once he perceived that it was not sand at all, but people, —men and women, hundreds and thousands of them,—all clamouring, and roaring, and making hideous faces at him. And they all shrieked with one accord that he was “an informer ! an informer !” and that he must be torn in pieces. And Hurrish tried to pull him away, but failed. And some of the people had dog’s faces, and others had

helmets like the policemen; but most of them seemed dead, and had their eyes shut, and white bands under their chins. Then suddenly Alley took up the light and held it close to the crowd, so that he could see them all distinctly. And the light seemed to make the people melt as if they had been made of wax, and they fell back little by little, and lay in heaps, one on top of another, until at last he saw that they were not people at all, but seaweed. Then Hurrish took him up in his arms and put him into the boat, and they rowed away together up the Gortnacoppin valley until they came to the cabin where old Bridget was standing stirring the pot, and when she saw him she shrieked, and took up the boiling pot in her hand and ran at him, and tried to fling it over him; and he struggled, and they both fell together upon the floor, and the boiling water rolled everywhere and spread about like a new sea. And with that he awoke and found himself upon his back in the corrie, a newly-risen moon shining full

upon his face, and all the stony country around swimming in a silver mist, which almost hid the Atlantic. And he shivered and gathered the ulster closely about him, for the air was very chill, and soon afterwards fell asleep again, and this time dreamed pleasanter things—of his boyhood, of Hurish's admiration, of the great things he himself was to do when he grew up to be a man. But when he awoke the second time, and found that it was daylight, one of the first things he did was to wonder whether Mr Cavanagh, the resident magistrate, had yet returned from Limerick.

CHAPTER III.

ALLEY'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

ALLEY SHEEHAN came to herself very gradually after Maurice had left her. For some time she lay upon the same spot, hardly knowing what had happened, or why she was there at all. The act of fainting was so unfamiliar, that it seemed like a sort of death—as if she had passed out of the world, and then come back to it again. Little by little as she recovered, all the dreadful weight of gloom came floating slowly back across her poor little soul, as black thunder-clouds float back across some tiny pool or brook. She was too utterly worn out, however, to try and think it all out now—she who in the course of her short simple life had

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never hardly had to think before. After a while, therefore, she gathered herself up from the ground and began wearily retracing her steps, turning instinctively towards what she called her home, and crawling over the rocks with the languid, trailing step of one suddenly overtaken with old age.

She was met at the door by Bridget, who hailed upon her a furious volley of abuse and execrations, which would probably have proceeded to yet more violent extremities but that the old woman was too excited by the day's events to be able to turn her thoughts for more than a minute in any other direction. She moved about the cabin with an air of savage exultation, waving her hands and crashing them down with triumph upon every object they encountered. "At last!" her expression seemed to say. "At last, ye gods—at last!" So visibly exultant was she, that it was probably just as well for Hurrish that the police did not come at once to the cabin in search of him, or even those professional dullards might have succeeded

for once in extracting something from her in her present excitement.

Alley kept out of the way as well as the narrow dimensions of the cabin would admit of, too weary and sick at heart even to feel any alarm. Happily, when night came, Bridget roughly ordered her to undress at once and go to bed. The old woman was in a state of constantly increasing and now almost convulsive excitement. The boys had come in, and had repeated what had happened at the inquest, of which they had formed part of the irregular audience. Hurrish had not yet returned from Ballyvaughan,—indeed his mother did not know whether he intended to do so, or to try and escape at once. She was proud, and pleased, and excited, and horribly frightened all at once ; above all, she was suspicious, and Alley Sheehan was the chief object of her suspicions. She had always regarded the girl as an interloper—an eater of other people's bread,—an intruder where she was not wanted and had no business to be ; and now in addition

she began to suspect her of being a spy, a traitor. The scene beside the dead man's body that morning had suggested to her violent and utterly unreasoning old wits that Alley would be capable of betraying Hurrish—selling him to the “polis”! With this idea in her mind she never allowed the poor child out of her sight, following her about all the afternoon with angry blood-shot glances, as she moved to and fro about her various household duties, trying as usual to bring a little order into the crowded and chronic disorders of the scene. Fortunately for herself, Alley knew nothing of these suspicions. And when she had given the boys their supper, washed out the black pot and left it with a supply of water ready to Bridget's hand, she crawled thankfully into the heap of rags and straw, covered with a blanket, which she and little Katty shared in the inner room; and there, gathering the child up closely first into her arms for comfort and sustainment, worn out with the events of the day, she sobbed herself to sleep.

When she awoke, it was still deep night, but a moon had risen, and was sending a thin, straggling, zigzag ray of light through the window set in the stone wall immediately above her bed. It was not often that the moonlight was able to come in there, for the window was so small that it was only at one particular angle that it could hit off the tiny square, barely six inches either way—a square, alas ! carefully puttied in on all sides, and utterly useless therefore for the much-needed purpose of ventilation.

Alley lay for a while looking at the silver ray, as it partially lit up the narrow, dusty interior—the bed where the two boys slept, the corner where a number of chickens were reposing upon a bar of wood stuck into the wall for their convenience, the fly-blown prints which constituted the only approach to adornment. Then moving carefully so as not to awaken little Katty, who lay curled in a pink ball with her two fat thumbs in her mouth, she got upon her knees and lifted herself up until she could peep through the

window—putting her face necessarily close to the solid, greenish glass for that purpose.

After the narrow obscurity of the dim interior, there was something startling in the luminousness of that stony world which met her view without. Under the wide wash of moonlight every stone showed visibly, each dashed in in white, as if a slight shower of snow had lately fallen. The deep rifts which crossed the platforms in every direction looked black and sharp, as if ruled in ink upon that snowy surface. Some big nightbird—probably an owl—flew by with a sudden whirring of its wings. The wide arch of sky was bare of cloud right down to the very horizon, a few stars pulsating faintly far in the dreamy West. Alley shivered, and felt frightened at that immensity. It seemed to confront her sternly and threateningly, as if to demand her secret, and she turned hurriedly back to the small room and its overflowing occupants, with a sense of relief and human companionship.

The door into the outer room was open,

and the moon had by this time found its way in there too. Her eye mechanically followed the white guiding finger, as it traversed the thick darkness, heavy with human breath, and the lingering smoke from the big chimney. It lit upon the top of a bed—the only one in the establishment deserving of the name—brought there, as she knew well, by her aunt, Mary Sheehan, upon her marriage. A black curly head lay upon the pillow of this bed, and the white guiding finger, which had just travelled to the spot, rested full upon the features of Hurrish, as he lay with one arm outside the blanket, which heaved slowly up and down, under the rhythmic rise and fall of his broad chest.

Alley had been used to seeing Hurrish there ever since, as a child of nine years old, she had first come to the cabin. As to there being any impropriety or indecorum in such close neighbourhood, such an idea had never even distantly crossed her imagination. She was pure as only a girl brought up in such a state of utterly savage

innocence could be pure — pure, that is, to the point of barely realising the existence of impurity. Now, however, she started up, and gazed at him with widely-distended eyes, as if she had seen him there for the first time. It brought back all the terrors of the day before with such horrible, such appalling vividness. She seemed to live over again the moment when she had first discovered the dead man, and that still worse moment when old Bridget had flourished the blackthorn stick in her face, and had told her, with fiendish glee, that Hurrish was the murderer! Was it true? Was he, *could* he be, that dreadful thing? Would he be sleeping there so peacefully—as peacefully as his own little Katty curled up in the bed beside her—if he had really killed Mat Brady? A murderer she felt sure would look very differently,—more like the ugly yellow Judas in the picture which hung over the dresser—angry, scowling, dark,—not good and kind like Hurrish, whose face looked pleased and friendly even in his sleep.

Like every girl of her class and country, Alley was perfectly well used to hearing murder talked of, and talked of, too, without any special reprobation. She had heard such talk going on around her all her life, though the deeds described were naturally rarely called by so offensive a name. In all these cases, however, there had been a certain vagueness about the actual perpetrator. It was "justice," the "society," the "brotherhood"; and the "society" has in Ireland long since come to occupy in popular imagination the place of a despised and derided executive. Even so Alley had often shuddered at the ideas which the talk had called up. Sensitive natures, however accustomed to horrible images, rarely accept them in their entirety. They start aside and cry, "Not that! not that!" They invent some other and less terrible explanation to account for what they hear. Even a Roman girl, accustomed from babyhood to hearing of the delights of the amphitheatre, must now and then have turned sick with horror, one would

think, when first some time-honoured piece of barbarity was enacted before her eyes, —must have implored, with streaming eyes, that this or that particular victim might be allowed to escape. Alley, poor little trembling soul, was no Roman maiden, and the harsh realities of her lot pressed with cruel severity upon her gentle timorous spirit. She remained there for some time kneeling upon the bed, suffering as only such a spirit can suffer when brought for the first time face to face with those hideous and, alas! not imaginary phantoms—Death, Suffering, Crime. At last, with a sort of despair, she got up, crossed the room, took down her rosary from the nail where it hung, got back into bed again, crossed herself, and began to pray.

She prayed for Hurrish, for Maurice, for herself—that she might be good, that she might not be so frightened, that she might be delivered from evil. As the beads slipped one by one through her fingers, her lips mechanically repeated the prayers given

to be recited with them. Her thoughts, however, outflowed the words. There was a native tide of adoration, a flow of innocent love in her spiritual nature which seemed to supply the place of that intellect which she certainly did not possess, and which gave her strength in the midst of her fears. Kneeling there upon her miserable bed, her face uplifted, her wide, innocent eyes fixed upon the small square of light overhead, she might have suggested the image of some pure and sainted soul, come from its serene abode to visit some dark and loathsome tomb. Her slight girlish figure, denuded of the uncouth clothes which she wore in the daytime, and half bathed in the stream of white light, looked vaporous and unreal. She was hardly herself conscious of her body, hardly conscious of her fatigue—even the terrors of the day before seemed to melt away in the glow of her thoughts. It was as if she were caught up by some power external to herself, caught as in a mother's arms. That was her own feeling.

Often when she prayed it did actually seem to her as if a mother's arms were around her. Was there not, in fact, a mother always near? A kind, tender, pitying mother? a mother whom no amount of weakness or faultiness could weary or alienate?

At last she began to pray for Mat Brady. The very thought of his name frightened her at first. She seemed to see the scene again as she had seen it that morning—the stony glen, the singing larks, the dead man hideously twisted upon the ground, his blank eyes fixed upon the sky, his hands lying loose amongst the grass and flowers. The shock and terror returned, and a horror filled the air. As she went on, however, she gathered strength, and these terrors little by little passed away. There was a particular prayer to be used for the dead which she tried to remember. She could not do so, however, so had to fall back upon her own artless words instead. Her innocent spirit followed the dull, brutish, crime-encumbered one, as it fled into the

darkness and the mystery. As she prayed, this darkness seemed gradually to melt, and a vague sense of light, of pity, and of opening doors, to take its place. Then the light itself grew vaguer. There was a sensation of hovering and floating, and sounds like birds chirping, and the buzzing of bees. Then these all melted together into a great silence, and poor little Alley was once more asleep.

When she awoke again it was broad daylight. The boys were up and running about, half-dressed, and lively as crickets, and old Bridget's harsh screaming voice was heard calling to her from the other room to get up at once for a lazy hussy, and bring the child in.

She got up, feeling as if she had been beaten, and could hardly summon energy to collect and put on her own and little Katty's clothes. Washing was a ceremony for which—well-to-do, comparatively speaking, as the O'Briens were—there was, alas, remarkably slight provision !

When she got into the outer room Hurrish was sitting by the fire, lighting his pipe with a sod of "live" turf held between his finger and thumb; Lep—his lustrous brown eyes fixed upon his master—sitting erect beside him. She noticed that Hurrish did not turn round as he generally did and greet them with a laugh and a joking word; and although little Katty ran up to him at once, and caught him round the leg with her fat pinching fingers, he allowed her to do so without lifting her to his knee, or making any response to her baby prattle. Bridget, too, had lost her air of exultation, and stalked about the kitchen sullenly, only opening her lips to give utterance to some word of reprobation, usually addressed to Alley herself. The boys were the only people, in fact, who behaved as usual, and watched the pot and the manipulations of their grandmother's iron spoon with their customary air of eager, puppy-like expectation.

Twice while she was helping Bridget to prepare the stirabout a man came to the

door, said a word to Hurrish, and then ran away again. He sat stolidly on by the fire, however, his pipe in his mouth, his eyes fixed upon the smouldering sods of turf. Suddenly a sound of panting was heard outside—"pant, pant, pant"—like a dog hard pressed that nears his shelter. The door was flung open, and poor Thady-na-Taggart the "natural" rushed in. He stood stock-still for a moment on the threshold; his lank hair, blown wildly about by the wind, hung loosely over his white vacant face; his lack-lustre eyes—dazzled from the daylight—roamed round evidently in search of some one. At last he distinguished Hurrish, and rushing up to him, clutched him by the arms, urging him vehemently, though silently, to get up and come away with him. Lep barked and sprang angrily at the new-comer, then, as if ashamed, wagged his tail, and licked Thady's hand. Thady, however, took no notice; all his thoughts evidently were concentrated upon Hurrish. He first tried to pull him

off his stool ; that failing, put his arms bodily round him, as if to induce him to stand up. Then—Hurrish still declining to yield, and his weight being too great for him to pull him up by main force—he began frantically pulling off his own clothes, and hastily thrusting the first he got loose over Hurrish's head, evidently with the intention of dressing him up in them.

What wild idea of exchange of identity passed through the poor creature's bewildered brain Heaven alone knows ! But that it was touching in its devotion, the idea was laughable to the last degree. Hurrish was considerably over six feet high, and broad in proportion ; the idiot almost a dwarf, his ragged clothes, rain-shrunk and sun-discoloured, would barely have covered a third of the other man's body. At first Hurrish simply stared, failing to realise the meaning of the manoeuvre. When he did so, a smile of sudden pity came into his face, and he caught hold of poor Thady's hands

to hinder the process being carried further, which in another minute would have left him standing stark naked upon the floor.

“Thire, thire, Thady ! Sure I ondershtand what ye’re manin’ *now*,” he said, soothingly. “Don’t be shtripping of yersel’ no more, for sure the clothes wudn’t cover th’ half ov me. Be aisy, Thady dear ; you’ll see me safe again, sure an’ sartin, whatever happens !”

Apparently the words failed to make any entrance into the idiot’s mind, for he remained, his clothes half off, staring blankly, with an expression of piteous disappointment. The boys, who at first had remained apart, now drew near, and stood gaping at him, as at some strange wild animal they saw for the first time. Suddenly Thady opened his mouth to the widest possible extent, and burst into loud lamentations, the first sounds he had uttered since his entrance. Hurrish endeavoured to soothe him. Alley, too, drew near, with an impulse of pity.

But the idiot would have none of their consolation. Gathering the remainder of his rags, and leaving the one that he had tried to force upon Hurrish still lying upon the floor, he ran towards the door, the tears streaming down his poor face and making long light channels upon his cheeks, flew out of the cabin, his bare feet sounding for a minute—patter, patter, patter—upon the flags, and then ceasing suddenly.

There was a general pause—the boys staring blankly at one another and at their father, as if to ask the meaning of what had happened. Finding, however, that he took no notice, and quietly continued smoking, the paramount interest of breakfast soon resumed its dominion over their minds. The stirabout was boiling, and all the party were sitting silently waiting for it to be ready, when there came a new, and this time a more formidable interruption. A sudden startling rat-tat-tat sounded on the half-opened door. Instinctively Alley, who was

nearest, ran to see who was there, but fell back the next minute with a loud cry of dismay. It seemed to her as if the whole world had suddenly become filled with policemen ! Two were in the actual doorway, and three more a little way off in the bohereen below !

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROAD TO JAIL.

MR CAVANAGH, the “resident” magistrate (so called because the only one of the magistrates *not* a permanent resident), had returned from Limerick the previous evening, and had been at once interviewed by Mr Higgins. Upon the evidence laid before him, he, to that gentleman’s keen satisfaction, not only issued a warrant for Hurish’s arrest, but expressed himself in high terms of reprobation as to Mr O’Brien’s unaccountable conduct in having hesitated to do so. Within as short a time, therefore, as was possible after his arrest, our hero found himself upon a car, with one well-armed policeman beside him, and two

more upon the other side, bound for the assize town of Ennis, there to be lodged in jail to take his trial for murder—bail in a case of such gravity being, as a matter of course, refused.

He was not particularly alarmed for his own safety, and was able, therefore, to take the proceedings with a considerable amount of equanimity. He had had plenty of time to escape had he wished to do so, but had deliberately made up his mind against that course. Had he done so, beggary, pure and simple, would have stared his mother, the children, and Alley in the face. He had little or no money laid by, and as none of those left could have taken on the farm, of which he had only a yearly tenancy, within a very short time they would have had nothing to look to but the workhouse.

Over and above this, the mere fact of leaving Ireland—for life, as, under the circumstances, it must have been—would have been little less objectionable to him than death itself. He had never felt the faintest beck-

oning towards that delectable Land of Promise which lay upon the other side of the Atlantic. Had he not in his youth had the farm to look forward to, and had been forced to emigrate, his one thought day and night would have been to put together a sufficient sum of money and return to Ireland by the next ship. The only other alternative—that of remaining in the country *without* giving himself up—though a safe proceeding enough, is a remarkably uncomfortable one. Hurrish had seen others who had tried it, and knew its miseries. A week of such shuffling, skulking, shivering, night-wandering existence, would have driven him, he knew, into giving himself up to the police as a preferable alternative.

Going to jail — though a distinction, of course, in itself — was not, it is true, the precise form of distinction which he would have chosen, but then how few *are* entirely free to choose their own laurels? As to the danger of his incurring the further distinction of being hung, that was

an idea to which he hardly gave a thought. He knew the situation well enough to feel pretty sure that the danger incurred in that direction was of the slightest. As for what an Englishman would probably have considered the safest thing to do—pleading manslaughter, or unavoidable homicide, and disclosing the whole circumstances as they really occurred,—that, save under seal of confession to his priest, was an idea which would never for an instant have visited his imagination. In his eyes—probably in those of his legal adviser also—it would have seemed an act of simple and reprehensible self-destruction.

The road from Tubbamina to Ennis is about as desolate a one as is to be found in the whole west of Ireland, which, it must be owned, is saying a good deal. Once the rocky hills of the Burren were left behind, the car entered upon a wide grey-green undulating tract, treeless, featureless, almost houseless, one low green or brown hill rising after another in endless succession as far as

the eye could see. What cultivation there existed was of the most rudimentary type conceivable. Small, weedy-looking fields, divided from the road and from one another by dry walls of the lace-work variety, in some places by green dykes, with a fringe of willow or osmunda. Flakes of snow-white bog-cotton waved over dreary patches of swamp, and the dark heads of the reed mace crowded hollows from which turf had been cut and carted away. The houses, few and far between, were for the most part sunk below the level of the road. At one place three or four women were grubbing languidly at a sickly-looking plot of potatoes; at another two men were thatching, who turned and watched the car sullenly till it was out of sight. Then a mile or more without a creature save a stray cow on the road-side, or a sleepily-moving ass-cart. Suddenly they rattled round a sharp corner, and found themselves in the middle of a closely crowded cluster of houses, where the people all ran

eagerly to the doors to see them go by, and the women spat, shrieked, and shook their fists passionately at the policemen. Another smaller but more prosperous-looking hamlet was passed, where a smart, newly-built chapel flaunted its cut-stone masonry and twirling weather-cock, and a sinister old castle looked blackly down from a windy green hill hard by. Just after leaving this village, in the middle of a particularly lonely bit of road, a wild-looking young fellow—a total stranger to Hurrish—sprang actively over a wall as they were passing, bounded up to the car, though they were going at a smart pace at the time, and asked him in rapid Irish whether he wanted a rescue. The three constables simultaneously pointed their guns at him, and told him to remain there at his peril. The young fellow, however, took no notice, but ran lightly on, his brimless felt hat falling back from his black curly head, his sunburnt face and wild hawk eyes fixed exclusively upon the prisoner: evidently he was good for another ten miles if need

were. Hurrish, however, shook his head. It was not a rescue he wanted, but an acquittal, he explained. His unknown friend thereupon slackened speed suddenly, made a clutch at his hand to shake it, missed it, and disappeared immediately over another wall. From his appearance to his vanishing again there were scarcely three minutes.

When they got near to the outskirts of Ennis the car stopped at a police-station, and a short conference took place between the constables in charge and those within. Only one constable remained upon the car, and he appeared to be taking no particular heed of the prisoner. Hurrish, however, waited quietly. He had no idea of escaping. What would have been the use? It would only have been to begin the whole troublesome business over again. Better remain and see it out as it was.

A delicious brown trout-stream was sweeping under a bridge a little ahead of this point. A heron rose from its bank a few hundred yards lower down, spread

its great sail-like wings, and flew away towards the west, its brown legs stretched stiffly out behind it. Hurrish followed it wistfully with his eyes as it grew gradually smaller and smaller, until it was lost to sight in the distance. A sudden yearning, a sudden wild, fierce desire for liberty, swept across him like thirst in a desert. He had hardly realised before that he was a prisoner, but now it seemed as if all at once he knew it. *He* could not turn back as the heron had done; *he* could not get home to his own house and his own people; he was a caged animal; a beast with a rope round its leg,—driven against his will as a sheep or a cow is driven to the market. To any one, but especially to so wild a son of the soil, the first realisation of this fact has something in it that maddens. He looked suddenly round, first at the sleepy, vacant country, then up and down the road, and for a moment a thought of escape crossed his mind. Only for a mo-

ment. The hopelessness of the attempt rushed back upon him forcibly. He caught the eye of the constable, too, looking inquisitively at him across the well of the car. An impulse of self-respect made him relax the eagerness of the gaze, turn his head the other way, and resume his former air and attitude of indifference.

A minute after the other two constables returned, and directing the carman to take a detour which avoided the main street, got again upon the car and drove rapidly to the jail. Their way lay along a dirty but tolerably prosperous-looking street, where a number of peasant women were bargaining for the gorgeous crimson and magenta shawls and petticoats hung up in tempting array along the outsides of the shops. It was market-day, and they were too eager to finish their purchases, and get back to their donkey-carts, to take much notice of the prisoner or his escort. Hurrish gazed at it all with the aching interest a man feels in the last

things he beholds before the doors of a prison close behind him. Ennis, with its crowded market-place, — the centre of all the other smaller villages round about — its gorgeous new cathedral; its statue of the Liberator; its political pretension; its air of bustle and importance, — was London, Paris, Vienna, all at once to him, and this glimpse of fashion and brilliancy was not, even under the circumstances, without a pleasurable excitement.

He had not much time to enjoy it, however. The shops ceased; a line of stone walls, cold, high, and vacant-looking, took their place; they had arrived at the door of the jail. The three constables jumped down and took him by the arms. The door opened, and he was marched inside. Some one in authority advanced. Then, after a few minutes' delay, he was marched down a narrow passage, with iron-clamped doors on either side; one of these doors was unlocked, disclosing a narrow cell about the

size of a bathing-box. Into this he was walked, and the next minute—almost before he had fairly realised what had happened—the door shut behind him with an emphatic bang.

He stood still a moment, half-stunned, then stumbled over to the bed and sat down. It seemed as if the concussion of the door had shaken his ideas clean out of their usual courses. He felt numbed and stupefied, as if he had suddenly changed his identity with some one else, and had not got accustomed to the new one.

He was roused by a peculiar sensation of discomfort. The window of the cell was set in the outer wall of the prison, and a full blaze of daylight was pouring through it at that moment. It lit up every atom of the narrow space, glaring with immaculate whitewash, which reflected itself in twofold brilliancy at all the corners, and threw a responsive gleam upon the magnificently scoured boards. Hurrish felt dazed and

giddy as a fish would have been, suddenly exposed to so brilliant an illumination. An unreasoning hatred for this glaring self-righteous place, into which he had been pushed, rose to his mind, and it was with some difficulty that he resisted rushing against the door and wounding himself in a vain effort to break through. Next to the whitewash, the worst offence—alas! poor Hurrish—was the ultra self-glorifying cleanliness! The ghastly cleanliness and whiteness together nearly made him sick. Out of doors he was used, of course, to light, but then no one out of doors is surrounded by a girdle of dazzling whiteness, a few feet from the end of his nose. How he yearned after his own brown weather-beaten cabin, with its smoke-obscured corners and multitudinous litter! Was there nothing else he could look at, he asked himself—*nothing*? If he had to stay staring at those sickening white walls for the next three weeks, he should

go mad, and that would be very nearly as bad as being hung!

Suddenly the window itself caught his eye. It was high up in the wall, but by mounting upon a chair and pulling himself upwards, he was able, by sheer muscular effort, to get his nose and eyes over the ledge, and this he proceeded to do. It was strongly secured, but to his relief he found that it looked, not into the courtyard, but into the outer world. By stretching upwards he could even see a bit of the street below, and people passing and repassing. A black-faced beggar, with grimy professional clothes hanging on by a few alarmingly fragile ribbons, was leaning against the opposite wall, stretching out from time to time a mechanical hand for alms. An old woman, with a basket of apples before her, was squatting upon the ground, and at her feet a small fair-haired child, presumably her grandchild, was amusing itself by picking up fragments

of apple-peel, and throwing them into the gutter. A feeling of unaccountable affection for these strange people filled Hurrish's mind, and the tears sprang into his eyes. The little girl was a pretty little creature, dressed in a single ragged garment, which left her small limbs and neck completely bare ; against the grimy obscurity of the wall beyond, they looked wonderfully fresh and white. Suddenly a car came round the corner, imperiling the feet of the group. Hurrish, with an impulse of alarm, instinctively stretched out his hands as if to protect the child. A young man was seated on the car,—a slight active figure in a well-fitting suit of grey tweed. He was not really at all like Maurice Brady, still there was sufficient suggestion of resemblance to give Hurrish first a feeling of pleasure, to be immediately followed by a sudden bitter start of pain. Maurice Brady ! That was the worst of all,—the only part of the misfortune that had overtaken him which *was* unendurable. He let him-

self drop from the window, and sat down again upon his pallet, his arms and legs falling despondently together, — a mere nerveless heap of dejected frieze!

When he had been first told that Maurice had denounced him, the intelligence had roused him to a fit of violent indignation—not against Maurice but his informant. He absolutely refused to give any credit whatever to the assertion. When, little by little, the truth of it, however, began to sink into his mind, it had produced a sort of torpor. He could not conceive it,—could not realise it, or get hold of the idea at all. All the time he was standing before the magistrate, all the time he was on the car, his thoughts kept recurring to it, and each time with the same dull sense of unreality. It was not merely painful or disagreeable, but it was inconceivable—a thing past imagination or finding out. If Maurice had attacked him, shot him, assaulted him in any way—*that* he could have understood, for a brother, after all, is

a brother ; but to denounce him to the police, to the Government !—" th' *Inglish* Government !" — he kept repeating over and over to himself, as if it was in the very least likely that Maurice would have denounced him to the Spanish or the Dutch one !

Three or four hours after he had been in jail a warder brought him a large piece of bread, and some broth swimming with grease. He was very hungry, and ate with a good appetite. He tried to get into conversation with the man, but he turned away and shut the door without answering. Hurrish spun out the eating of his bread as long as he could, but all too soon it came to an end, and again vacuum stared him in the face. It seemed as if he had been already weeks in jail—as if all his previous life had been a dream, and this the reality. The punishment of imprisonment no doubt varies enormously, and to so wild a son of freedom—one to whom wind, rain, storm, all varieties of weather were welcome, but who had never

yet spent an entire day in the house in his life—the misery must indeed have pretty nearly attained its maximum.

After a while he clambered up to the window again and resumed his gaze. It was his only link with the outer world, and as such he clung to it. Night came on, but still he remained. The figures below had by that time become mere phantoms,—still they were human phantoms, and moving ones. By the light of the one lamp at the corner, he saw a sooty object in coat and hat pass an equally sooty one in petticoats and a shawl; then both looked back, mutual recognitions ensued, and they stood a while conversing amicably. A beggar was meanwhile bawling out a song, walking leisurely up and down the middle of the street, with his mouth wide open. Hurrish caught a stray word now and then—"The mas-a-cree-in va-ga-bonds". . . "me dar-lint Paa-a-ady Wh-a-ck." Suddenly a turnkey entered behind and roughly desired him to get down

and go to bed. The lights were going to be put out. He got down, and, pulling off some of his clothes, threw himself upon the pallet. It was as hard as a brick floor, but that made very little difference, and within half an hour he was sound asleep,—and so his first day's experience of Ennis jail came to an end.

CHAPTER V.

MR THOMOND O'BRIEN UPON THE REQUIRE-
MENTS OF IRELAND.

AMONGST the many touches of unconscious humour with which all life and history abounds, few perhaps are odder than the minuteness—the inconceivable minuteness—of the points upon which a man's good or bad reputation turns with his contemporaries. Ever since he had been settled at Donore, Major Pierce O'Brien had done, or had at any rate tried to do, everything he could think of for the welfare and advantage of its people, and had been rewarded with suspicion, hatred, and ill-will, ending with repeated threats of death. All of a sudden, by the merest piece of chance, for declining to do what he

ought no doubt in strictness to have done, and thereby setting himself in momentary opposition to the established powers, he suddenly, and at a bound, sprang from the blackest depths of unpopularity to the very summit of popular admiration !

Within a dozen hours of the "outrage," and simultaneously with the news of it, all over Ireland had flown the news of his refusal to sign the warrant for Hurrish's arrest, —news which was received, commented upon, praised, or condemned according to the politics of the hearer. In the course of an excited and somewhat incoherent article, that advanced organ 'The Wolfhound' had rejoiced next morning to learn that the once glorious and patriotic name of O'Brien was again to be seen upon the blood-stained banner of the people, and had commended him, in involved but evidently complimentary terms, upon the courage with which he had set the Government and its brutal hirelings at defiance. The consequence of all this, joined to the popular feeling in favour

of Hurrish, had suddenly—as if with the finger of a magician—lifted the ban that had so long hung over Donore, and flung it for the time being to the winds. In every cabin upon the property, and at every wake, fair, and local meeting of any sort, this performance of the “mhaster’s” was the theme of universal commendation, which amongst his own particular retainers rose for the moment to a pitch of absolute enthusiasm.

To no human being did this sudden and most undeserved rush of popularity come with more complete astonishment than to the recipient of it. In refusing to sign the warrant for Hurrish’s arrest, Mr O’Brien had been actuated by no sympathy, assuredly, with the blood-stained banner of the people, but simply by a prosaic disbelief in his guilt, combined, it must be owned, with a small and very private grudge against that self-satisfied official Mr Sub-inspector Higgins. He was no more of a Nationalist, or a Liberal even, than he had ever been. As for oppos-

ing the Government, and throwing himself upon the popular side, such an idea—despite his small private admiration for that shilly-shallying abstraction—had never, it need hardly be said, dawned upon his imagination. He scoffed openly at the manifestations of this change of popular opinion whenever they came under his notice, but though he scoffed, it must be owned that in his heart of hearts he was rather pleased than otherwise. Can you, after all, blame him? What friendly-minded man, who has been condemned for years to a winter of black looks, averted eyes, and all the hundred and one petty proofs of inveterate dislike, can avoid a certain thrill of pleasure when suddenly brows clear, hats are doffed, and faces beam with delight at his approach. The temptation to sue for an ephemeral popularity is greater perhaps in Ireland than in any other country in the world, for the reason that in none is the reward so spontaneous. The proverbial smiles and frowns of her climate are not more startling in

their transitions than are the often equally unaccountable ones of her sons. Certainly that Mr O'Brien, and all the tenants on the estate, and all the other cottars and small people round about, should be of one mind upon any subject, and that subject a murder, was a sufficiently surprising fact to be worth recording! There were differences, it is true. Whereas he genuinely believed Hurrish to have had nothing at all to do with the matter, they as genuinely believed him to have done it deliberately, and applauded him heartily in consequence. The difference you will say is considerable, but practically it came to much the same thing in the end.

It happened that the week after these events had occurred, Mr O'Brien's solitude was broken in upon by the advent of a nephew, one Thomond O'Brien—a name that awakens stirring memories in Clare. This Thomond was a son of his youngest brother, and had been wont to spend his holidays under his uncle's roof; indeed Pierce O'Brien,

having only daughters, had come to regard the lad in the light of a son. And a very masterful son he had proved, his holiday having invariably been the signal for a sort of pandemonium and wild licence let loose upon Donore. He had danced jigs with the maid-servants; made bonfires on all the hills around; visited every wake, faction-fight, and wedding he could hear of in the neighbourhood; wasted everybody's time; made everybody run hither and thither to do his errands, and been universally adored—as no O'Brien since '48 probably had been adored.

He was only eighteen now, and five years in her Majesty's navy had not entirely subdued the native humours of his blood. He descended upon Donore and its inhabitants as upon a conquered country, which he proceeded at once to parcel out as seemed good in his sight. As he drove along on the car from the station, his small sharp brown eyes gazed around him right and left with the conquering glance of a Napoleon. To

him it was all still the "kingdom" of the O'Briens.

To any one who only skims the merest surface of things, there is no lack of "diversion," happily, still extant in Ireland. The fun, it is true, is on the surface, the bitterness, discord, misery down at the roots, in a distracted present and an unforgotten past. Poor Pierce O'Brien knew this uglier side of the shield only too well. The weight of it had eaten into his heart, and into the very marrow of his bones. He was not so ossified in gloom, however, as to refuse to hail the diversion with a feeling of satisfaction. As for young Thomond, he simply and honestly disbelieved in the gloomier side of things altogether. As for his uncle Pierce having ever been in peril of his life—that he dismissed as utterly incredible and monstrous!—a fiction of "the Government" and the police. They were always getting up some cock-and-bull stories or other; they had nothing else, poor devils, in his opinion, to do!

He had not been half a dozen hours in the place before everything was turned inside out, and put upon a new footing. He got out the boat, which had long slumbered, half full of water, in its moss-grown boat-house, and had it cleaned and baled. One man was despatched for a mop, another for a landing-net, a third had to go and dig bait, a fourth was sent flying to Tubbamina for more fishing-line. Young Thomond had inherited a considerable smack of the old Thomond's ways, and had remarkably clear views on the subject of getting himself obeyed, and obeyed sure enough he was. There was more work done and more activity displayed in that one morning at Donore than there had been for months, nay, years past; but then everybody had something to do that was not precisely his own business, and that in Ireland is an enormous incentive to industry.

Pierce O'Brien stood looking on, lifting his eyebrows, mocking at the boy, but pleased the while. Young Thomond was not by any

means pleased. He complained that everything had got into a shameful state of disorganisation during his absence.

"I say, what on earth have they been doing to the trout?" he inquired, indignantly. "That Pat O'Gorman says there's hardly any in the lake now, and they used to be as thick as peas."

"Poached," his uncle responded, laconically.

"Poached! I'd poach them! Why don't you catch half a dozen, and run them in?"

"In where?"

"Into jail; or give them a right good hiding. That's what I'd do if I were you."

"They are very much more likely to give me a hiding," Mr O'Brien replied mildly.

Half an hour later—

"I say, those fellows of yours are the greatest lot of muffs I ever saw in my life. They're not worth twopence the whole box and dice of them. Can't we shunt them, and get some one else? What's become of that

big fellow, Hurrish O'Brien, who used to fish with us? Send off for him. He's worth a dozen of these butter-fingers. He used to be a nailer, I remember, at night-lines."

"Unfortunately he has been what you call 'run in.'"

"Hurrish run in? Good Lord! what for? Not for poaching?"

"Worse than poaching."

"*Worse!* What's worse than poaching?"

"Murder."

Young Thomond's jaw dropped, and he nearly let the line he was reeling fall on to the grass.

"Murder! Look here, I say, uncle, don't chaff a fellow," he said, indignantly.

"I'm not chaffing, unfortunately."

"Why, do you mean to say—— Pooh! it's preposterous. Why, he used to be the decentest fellow we had."

"So he is still."

"Then why do you say he's murdered some one?"

“*I* don’t say it. On the contrary, I don’t believe it.”

“Who does then?”

“The Government.”

“The *Government!* What business, I should like to know, has the Government to interfere with *our* people? Who do they say he’s murdered?”

“A man called Mat Brady.”

“I remember. Big ugly brute, with a jaw like a hippopotamus, and a coxy brother. I don’t expect *he’s* any loss, anyhow.”

“Perhaps not. Still you see brutes—at least when they happen to have only two legs—can’t be killed with impunity, can they?”

Young Thomond shook his head, declining to commit himself to any decision. It was his fixed opinion that his uncle’s laxity in his dealings with his “people” was at the bottom of half what was amiss on the property. If Irish country gentlemen—those of the old stock, particularly—would only put their feet down resolutely, encourage the decent fel-

lows, drive all the agitators into the sea, and bid the English Government mind its own affairs and leave the management of Ireland to *them*, everything, in that clear-sighted young gentleman's opinion, would go as it ought to do.

The dinner-bell rang, and he was obliged to suspend his operations, and allow his exhausted assistants to retire, worn out by the unusual labours of the day, to their respective homes. At dinner his uncle gave him an outline of the events of the past week, not without some satisfaction in finding an auditor to whom to recount his version of the points at issue between himself and Sub-inspector Higgins. Young Thomond more than accepted that view, and would willingly have gone off there and then to do battle with the miserable official who had dared to come between the O'Brien and his own. Who should decide whether they were guilty or not except their own landlord? His five years in her Majesty's navy notwithstanding, the young gentleman pos-

sessed, it will be observed, a cargo of ideas of a truly distressingly antiquated description. He was a survival, a forgotten fragment, a small leaf from the fallen tree of the past. "Our people," "our ways," "our land," "our country," were words never out of his mouth. That an O'Brien should be the father and protector of his people, and that they in return should yield him a loyalty which stopped short at nothing, even death, seemed to him the most commonplace of self-evident propositions. Where precisely the boy had acquired these very defunct ideas of his it would be difficult to say. Absence, no doubt, had a good deal to say to them, and had fed a stream which flowed naturally in his blood. He had been travelling backwards while the country and the world had been travelling forwards. Those five years too during which he had been away had been five very momentous ones, it must be remembered.

For the next few days he was too busy getting everything to his liking at Donore, and

issuing his orders, to have time for any longer excursion, but the third day after his arrival he set off by himself to Gortnacoppin to inspect the scene of the outrage, not without a private belief that his observation would probably be equal to alighting upon some clue, which the police and "Government" between them had hitherto failed to discover.

Leaving the edge of the lake, he clambered up the ridge which rose immediately above it, and got upon that narrow stony pathway which, as the reader may remember, ran past the Bradys' house until it joined the high-road, from which point you diverged a little lower down into the Gortnacoppin valley. It was all part of the Donore property, and our young friend looked round him, therefore, with all the gravity of a responsible guardian, innocent of a certain redoubtable Land Bill, which was at that very moment hovering in the air, and upon the point of descending.

He paused a moment before the Bradys'

house, and shook his head with an air of reprobation. He did not remember for the moment who it belonged to, but its aspect of filth and desolation scandalised him. A little further down, on a small eminence to the left of the road, he noticed a young man sitting by himself, whose appearance rather perplexed him. He was not a gentleman, certainly, and yet, still more forcibly, he was not a frieze-coated "tinint," and anything between these two alternatives was foreign to his previous experiences at Donore. When he got as close as the path ran to the spot, he perceived that it was no other than that "coxy brother" of the man whom Hurrish O'Brien was accused of murdering, and whose farm, he now remembered, covered this part of the hill. This did not seem to him to be any reason for not stopping and speaking. He had always been in the habit of speaking to every one connected with the estate, and, without actually formulating that opinion, had always concluded, in a general way, that his notice

could never be anything but gratifying to the recipient of it.

“Hullo ! How d’ye do ?” he called out, stopping short and nodding his head in a friendly fashion. “You’re Maurice Brady, aren’t you ? Didn’t recognise you at first. You hadn’t grown a moustache when I sailed, and that changes a fellow so. Every one is changed about here, I think, except some of the old chaps—they don’t alter much.”

He had got over the fence while he was speaking, and advanced, holding out his hand with the utmost affability. Maurice Brady, however, drew back as precipitately as if a sociable rattlesnake or cobra had been presented at him. It was impossible for him to have encountered any one more intensely irritating to him in his present frame of mind than this complacent little sailor, who looked as if the world at large, and Donore in particular, was a sort of holiday kingdom, specially laid out for his entertainment ; who had that air too of unconscious patronage which, of all varieties of

the human manner, was to Maurice Brady the most insufferable upon earth. Even at the shop he had always, whenever it was possible, avoided having any intercourse with men of his own age—those, that is, who stood upon a higher social platform than his own. Ladies he did not so much mind. His self-confidence had its effect upon them; besides, a shopman is always naturally, and as it were officially, the superior of his female customers. He told himself that the reason of this dislike was on account of his deep-laid democratic convictions: it was unendurable to him to see a fellow-creature who appeared to think himself better than another. In reality, however, it was rather that he was conscious of his democratic convictions not being quite so deep as they ought to have been. The will was there, but the power, unfortunately, was wanting. No Irishman—no Irishman born of peasant parents at any rate—is ever genuinely and at heart a democrat. The whole theory is exotic—never has been, and never will be,

otherwise. Maurice Brady had done his utmost to assimilate it, but had failed, and the struggle told upon his manner. Instead of that mixture of easy courtesy and self-respect which becomes a polite citizen and an equal, it had alternations from suppressed servility to open surliness, and of this he was too intelligent not to be himself aware.

Young Thomond, though a little surprised at his manner, merely thought that he was taken by surprise, and awkward in consequence. Very likely he was shy—fellows were apt to be shy when they were spoken to by their betters. That any man in young Brady's position could fail to be gratified by being noticed by one in his—Thomond O'Brien's—was an idea which would have required a great many convincing proofs to impress upon his mind.

“I say, what an awful thing that was about your brother,” he began again in a tone of eager cordiality. “It's perfectly scandalous to think of fellows being murdered like that in broad daylight, and not

a soul found to give evidence about it. Of course, though, *you* don't believe this ridiculous story the Government have got hold of against Hurrish O'Brien? Why, he is the *last* man that would have done such a thing! My uncle has the highest opinion of him possible, and so have *I*."

He waited a moment, but as the other still said nothing, went on again. "I remember his bringing you over with him once to Donore when you were a little bit of a chap. He was always the decentest fellow out and out about the place, and the best tenant too. I'd rather have him than a whole cargo of the rest!" Another pause, and then: "Look here, I say, you *don't* believe this rubbish of his having anything to say to it, do you?" he added sharply, irritated by the other's persistent silence.

Maurice's brows had been growing darker and darker.

"I'm not going for to say whether I do or I don't," he said sullenly. "If you want to find out about it, you'll have to wait till

the 'sizes. You'll hear enough of it then, or you can read about it in the newspapers. If Hurrish O'Brien is innocent, he'll be able to prove it fast enough, and if he's guilty it don't make much matter what other people think about him, only what the jury think.

Young Thomond's open boyish face darkened sensibly, and he drew his short little sailorly figure up to its full height. He was quick to catch a hostile note ; and that the fellow meant, as he put it to himself, to " give cheek," there could be very little doubt.

" My uncle and I are *certain* he had nothing to say to it," he said in his lordliest tone and air.

" Oh, you *are*, are you ? Then that settles the matter, *of course!*" Maurice Brady replied with a bitter sneer.

The blood flew to young O'Brien's cheek, and he made half a step forward. Another minute and his fists would have been in the other's face. Maurice watched him with a sullen gleam of satisfaction. Nothing could

have pleased him better or done him more good at that moment than to have had a hand-to-hand tussle with this complacent young sprig of landlordism. He felt a savage delight in the mere thought of having him by the throat and pounding that patronising face of his into a jelly. For a moment the two antagonists measured one another with their eyes. Maurice was by several years the elder, and a good four inches the taller. On the other hand, young O'Brien was a mass of muscle, strong as a bull-dog, and active as a cat—a fighter, too, by birth, instinct, and profession, which Maurice was not. Had the struggle come on, a good judge would certainly have laid the betting upon the smaller man. Happily for the interests of peace, young Thomond's pride was at least as strong as his pugnacity. What, come to fisticuffs with the brother of a "tinint"! condescend to a scuffle by the roadside! He, an O'Brien of Donore! He clenched his hands tight, and rammed them down to the very bottom of his

pockets as a preservation against temptation; looked the other in the face exactly between the two eyes; turned upon his heels, stalked back to the fence, clambering over it with as much dignity as was consistent with his haste, and marched rapidly away down the road—his head in the air, his shoulders squared, his foolish young face red as a turkey-cock's with suppressed passion.

He quite forgot in his excitement his intention of visiting Gortnacoppin, upon which he was steadily turning his back; forgot everything but the fact that he—a gentleman—an officer in her Majesty's navy—an O'Brien of Donore—had been insulted, deliberately "cheeked" upon his own lands by a common fellow, a tenant on the estate. Once he halted with a sudden impulse of turning back, and showing the fellow which was the better man. His blood was up, and thirsty for the fray. He would willingly have given five years' pay at that moment to have been free to gratify the

impulse. He drove it back again resolutely, however, and marched on. No, he would not, he would *not*. If it had been a stranger, —a man with whom he had no connection, —he would have allowed himself the gratification in an instant. But a “tinint,” a fellow “off the estate,”—no, a thousand times no; pride, honour, everything forbade it. To abstain was gall and wormwood, but to yield would have been a thousand times worse. * A gentleman had to pay, after all, for being a gentleman. No man, he reflected, could expect to be born an O’Brien of Donore for nothing!

CHAPTER VI.

MAURICE TRIUMPHS OVER ALL HIS ENEMIES.

MAURICE BRADY looked after his retreating figure with a fierce scowl upon his handsome face. "Got rid of *you* pretty easily, me fine fellar," he said aloud. "You didn't take much to put you off fighting! no stomach for it, had you, me young cock?" He knew very well that it was not the case,—that pride, not want of pluck, was what had hindered the other from facing him. But even so, and though there was no one by to hear him, it did him good to say it.

Matters had been growing worse and worse since the day of his brother's death. The storm of indignation which his denouncement of Hurrish had created, far from sub-

siding, was growing louder and louder every day. Even at the funeral—which, despite the elder Brady's unpopularity, had been largely attended—not a soul had spoken to him. He had been tabooed, sent to Coventry—"boycotted" in short. He had returned the following day to Miltown-Malbay, but his position there was, as he soon discovered, if possible worse, in so far that it brought him more forcibly into contact with others. So intolerable was it, that a few days afterwards he gave notice to the master of the shop, and left hastily. The sudden revulsion from popularity to contempt and execration was horrible to him. The very men who had admired, followed, imitated him, were now the loudest in denouncing him. The whole of that anti-English anti-legal machinery which he had so often gloried in, which he counted so fully on making use of for his own ends, was turned against him. He was in direct opposition to the whole popular sentiment of the country. An informer! What more was there to be said?

There was something bewildering to a man like Maurice Brady in the suddenness of this downfall. He had been sailing along so successfully ; so buoyantly confident of the future ; so absolutely secure of his own powers. And now ! The rapidity of the fall made him feel literally sick. He could have torn his hair, gnashed his teeth, and rolled over and over on the ground from sheer bitterness of rage and disappointment. He was done for ! That was the long and short of it. Everything was at an end. His career wrecked,—finished before it had fairly begun. Not in Clare alone, but from one end of Ireland to the other, his name was the signal, he knew, for contempt and execration. Never would any Irish constituency open its doors to receive him ; never would his voice be heard in the halls of Westminster, or anywhere nearer home either ; never would a single one of those visions of success and triumph, upon which he had floated so securely, now come true ! Even his life as an obscure individual would, he

foresaw, be made intolerable. As soon as the trial was over, he would have, in all probability, to leave the country. Nay, the voice of execration would pursue him, he knew well, from one end of the world to the other. Wherever an Irishman was to be found—no mean area nowadays—there he should find an enemy. Was ever such cursed spite? Did ever so damnable a fate befall a brilliant and spirited young man before?

He could not turn back either, even had he wished to do so. He had given his evidence, and, whether he liked it or not, at the next assizes of Ennis he must assuredly appear. He was not at all sure that he *did* wish it. Anger against Hurrish was fast becoming, not merely a secondary, but a primary motive. His imagination—so vivid in everything that concerned himself—ran perpetually forward to all the ignominy that he had still to endure, and backward to Hurrish as the direct cause of it all. He ground his teeth with a vindic-

tive fury that was fast effacing all earlier reminiscences of gratitude and kindliness. They should see,—those fools who turned their backs upon him—that insolent young spark who had just left him,—they should see, he thought, whether their pet could get out of his scrape as easily as they imagined. If there was justice—his favourite formula—in Ireland or out of it, Hurrish O'Brien, he swore, should have the benefit of it.

He had been sitting there chewing the cud of his anger for about half an hour after young Thomond had left him, when another figure appeared in sight, coming down that little frequented path,—a stout roundabout figure in a suit of black broadcloth, with a high hat of surpassing shininess, a shininess so surpassing that it seemed to reflect the sunlight like a crow's back or a newly polished pair of shoes. It was Father Denahy, the parish priest of Tubbamina.

Maurice half rose with an impulse to escape. A second impulse made him seat himself again. Father Denahy, as every one

knew, had the eye of a hawk for a recusant parishioner. Better stay where he was than have the ignominy of being pursued, as pursue him he knew very well his reverence would, if he wanted him. In three minutes more the priest was on a level with him, and had made a halt in the middle of the pathway, exactly as young O'Brien had done. He was a big heavy-jawed man, with cheeks somewhat upon the pattern of those of a cod-fish. At the first glance he looked exactly like all the rest of his order, who to an outsider seem often as difficult to know apart as the individuals of a flight of crows. Closer observation, however, disclosed a peculiar kindliness, a sort of exuding benevolence in the big loose-lipped mouth, and small, round, keen-looking eyes. He had a warm heart, a sharp temper, and a Johnsonian capability for hatred. He kept the last two for his political enemies, but his kindliness was all given to his flock.

“And is that you, Maurice Brady, sittin’ there, and your parish priest standing oppo-

site to you?" he began, in an irregularly pitched Kerry brogue, and a tone of surprised remonstrance.

Maurice rose sullenly. He would have given a great deal to be able to turn on his heel and walk indifferently off, but thus openly to insult his "clergy" was more than at present he could venture upon.

"I've been wanting this week past to have some words with you," Father Denahy went on, in a more placable tone, "so I'm glad to see you where we are to our two selves. 'Tis a long time since you were at confession, Maurice Brady," he added with sudden sharpness.

To this the other made no reply. If he had spoken at all, it would have been to inform the priest that he had no intention of ever going to confession again. Confession! He knew better than to be taken in by *that* stale trick!

"Will I expect you to-morrow? 'Tis the day, you know."

Still no answer.

Father Denahy waited a minute. His anger was rising, for there was an unmistakable air of contempt about the young man's manner. He was too wise, however, to press that particular point further. He knew the character of each of his parishioners intimately, and was aware that Maurice Brady was a very awkward fish to tackle, much more likely to break away altogether than to yield to any pastoral angling, however dexterous. After a minute, therefore, he began again with a fresh cast.

"This has been a black week for you, me son," he said gravely; "a black week for others too. Those poor O'Briens! I've been round to their house just now, and 'tis a sad sight! To think of Hurrish O'Brien in Ennis jail!—Hurrish that was the credit of the parish—never a day short in his dues, and the best of sons and fathers,—a good father to you, too, Maurice Brady, when you wanted one badly," he added significantly.

He watched narrowly, to see if there were

any indications of yielding, but there was not an atom. Maurice's pale handsome face was like a stone mask, and his eyes had a cold light in them that was not encouraging.

His reverence tried another fly.

"I was speaking to Alley Sheehan. Poor innocent young creature! 'tis a sad sorrow to be laid on her, and she so young. I used to think wan of these days you and she, Maurice, would have been coming and asking me to give the Church's blessing on you both. Maybe, though, I was wrong?"

Again he paused and watched narrowly. He knew as well as the young man himself did, that he and Alley had been engaged to be married. It was better, however, if possible, to surprise an admission than to take it for granted.

This time Maurice was less indifferent. He was thinking rapidly. He was as anxious to marry Alley as ever, and if forced to leave Ireland, as seemed inevitable, his wish was to take her with him. He had enough money to be able to make a fresh

start in some new place, and to leave her behind, to hear of her marrying some other fellow, was simply intolerable to him. That if he called upon her to come, she would do so at once, he had not a doubt, but in that case it would certainly be necessary for them to call in Father Denahy's assistance, as nothing, he knew, would have induced her to wait to be married till they were in America, or wherever he might finally decide to go. These thoughts produced at once a corresponding effect upon his manner.

"You're right there, Father Denahy," he said in a tone of suitable respect. "Alley Sheehan and me have understood one another this good while back, and please goodness, we'll be asking your reverence to make man and wife of us some of these fine days, and before very long too, most like."

Father Denahy's small eyes gleamed. His last hook had struck home.

"So soon as you've done helping to hang Hurrish O'Brien, is it?" he inquired mildly.

Maurice started. Even to himself the

words had a hideous sound. He rallied quickly, however.

"'Tis himself that's doing that, not me," he said angrily. "Do you think I'd let my brother Mat be killed, and the man that did it go free? If you do, you must think me the meanest-spirited beast that crawls upon the face of th' earth!"

"I think you've about the blackest and the hardest heart between this and Cork, Maurice Brady, and that, if you wish to know, is what I think," the priest retorted as sharply. "I don't believe there's another—least, I hope an' pray to God there's not—would have thought ov doing what you've done. Denouncing him that's given you meat and sup, and been better nor a father to you! Giving him up to those that care no more, for the most part, than the crows do, whether a man's innocent or not, so they can clap him in prison. Why, a *haythen* wouldn't do such a thing—not a black haythen—so he wouldn't."

The attack was vigorous, and might have

been effective if brought to bear upon another man, but it was mistaken as directed against Maurice Brady. He was one to whom opposition only supplies a stimulating prick of excitement. Whatever he might feel alone—face to face at once with the future and the past—in the presence of an opponent he became hard and fixed as a rock. A priest's opinion, too, was the very last that would have moved him. Like most advanced Irishmen of his day, it was a distinctive "note" with him to abjure all priestly authority, and utterly to deride the presumption of one of that order pretending to interfere in politics or anything else—strictly sacerdotal matters, of course, excepted. His naturally supercilious face took a cold repellent air, and he eyed the worthy priest with a smile that was not, however, unaccompanied by considerable inward rage.

"Sure don't we know your reverence is always mightily partial to Hurrish O'Brien?" he said, with a sneer he no longer attempted to conceal. "'Tisn't every man puts his clergy

before everything else nowadays ; nor 't isn't every one would let his own kith and kin starve or eat dirt, so they had the fat of the land. Many's the fine chicken and turkey that will find its way to other quarters than it does if Hurrish O'Brien was once out of it for good and all."

Father Denahy's broad ruddy face grew purple, and the veins in his forehead swelled with the effort to repress his rage. He had too much self-respect, however, to descend to the level of a scolding match, or to remain measuring swords with an antagonist who not merely had no respect for his cloth, but actually made it a ground for reproach.

"Hearken to me, Maurice Brady, and mind what I'm saying to you, for these are the last words of mine maybe you'll hear," he said emphatically. "I denounce you! I throw you off! I've done with you for good and all, for better or worse, from this day forth and for evermore! Never say you were raised in my parish, for I wouldn't have no one think it. I wouldn't have any

one suppose I'd ought to do with such a black-hearted miscreant—false to his Church and his friends, and everything he ought for to venerate. From this day out, you're to me as if you were déad or had never been born, and so good-day, and the Lord have mercy on you, Mister Maurice Brady!"

And with a gesture of renouncement of his two uplifted hands, that was not without a certain sturdy dignity, Father Denahy stalked away down the road, leaving Maurice, for the second time that afternoon, victor upon the field.

If he had been disposed to espouse Hurish's cause before, it is only admitting he was human to say that the worthy priest was about ten thousand times more disposed to espouse it now. From a merely parochial matter, it had all at once sprung into a personal one, to ensure an acquittal being an object for which he felt prepared to strain every nerve. Probably in his heart of hearts he did believe him to have been guilty, but he also, with perfect honesty,

believed that a greater injury would be done by his being condemned than by his being acquitted. Hurrish—some slight peccadillos apart—had always been a credit to the parish—a good son, husband, father, neighbour, Catholic. For such a one to be hung, or thrust into that sink of iniquity, an English prison, would, in Father Denahy's eyes, have been a disaster of the first magnitude—an injury at once to public morals and to the man's own soul. He was a warm-hearted man, and—despite Maurice Brady's sneer—by no means a particularly grasping one,—a peccadillo which the circumstances of their lot is apt, it must be owned, to engender in his cloth. He hated England, it is true, and the English Government, and the English connection, and everything that even remotely pertained to it, with a deadly hatred, which no benefits, let them be never so accumulated, could in any degree have modified, and which he had proved upon a dozen platforms ; but that was perhaps his only serious failing.

Yet what had this same detested England done to him, after all, some impatient reader will perhaps exclaim, that such a sentiment—intelligible enough once—should be preserved, like a fossil scorpion or other bottled venom, to the misery and undoing of two countries? That, I reply, with the shrug of the exponent, is an excellent, nay, an unanswerable, argument, dear sir, in logic, but no argument at all, unfortunately, to a deep-seated, to all appearances an ineradicable, sense of injury, which has its seat, not in the brains at all, but in the blood. Hate, once engendered there—kept alive from generation to generation—becomes engrained, like gout or any other hereditary disease; and the physician who will undertake to cure it has yet, it is to be feared, to be born. When he is, the Irish problem will *begin* to be solved.

Maurice Brady, left alone meanwhile victorious upon his hillock, was not at first without a few slightly uncomfortable sensations. A priest's curse (and Father Denahy's parting words, if not quite amounting to that,

had certainly gone some way in that direction) could hardly fail to excite the imagination of one who, let his private emancipation be ever so complete, was still a Catholic, and the son of Catholic peasants. He shook off the feeling, however, with no very great difficulty. After all, what could Father Denahy *do*?—that was the question; and he was materialist enough not to trouble his head very greatly about any other.

Before many minutes had passed, he had left off thinking about that side of the matter and had turned to thinking of another—of Alley Sheehan,—that subject having been brought into prominence by the priest's words. He had always, as we know, taken his engagement to that modest little maiden with a very leisurely and lordly ease—nay, had wondered at himself not unfrequently for having ever entertained such an idea at all. It was a case of Cophetua and the beggar-maid—a condescension only to be accounted for by that accident of beauty which had raised one whom he would never otherwise

have looked at into a thing to be desired—an object which even the lordliest male could hardly pass over without desiring to appropriate. Possibly the fact of this slighting habit of regarding her had, by a not uncommon nemesis, caused her image to strike deeper into his breast than it would otherwise have done. At any rate, in the first heat of his fury against Hurrish, he had told himself emphatically that everything was now at an end between them. It would be intolerable to him to be married to one who, though no real blood relationship connected them, would still hourly and momentarily remind him of his brother's murderer. A little experience, however, proved that it was easier for him to make up his mind to cast her off than actually to do so. Though of a distinctly amorous turn by nature, he had somehow never had a genuine love affair, save with this poor little Alley. Others whom he might have been disposed to court were out of his reach, while the ordinary bouncing damsels of his own class

—such, for instance, as Sal Connor—were unmistakably not to his taste. Alley's very simplicity, humility, and deep-rooted piety were perhaps all the more seductive from their utter unlikeness to anything in himself; at any rate, he found his thoughts of late recurring to her with a frequency that was almost humiliating. Every fresh slight he received, every fresh proof that his boasted power over his contemporaries was gone for ever, sent his thoughts flying with greater vehemence in her direction. He longed, as he had never longed before, to find himself beside her—to be soothed by her gentle voice, to look into the mild light of her great grey eyes. In the first maddening smart of newly wounded egotism some such tender, unexacting affection—a soft tone to soothe, a pair of admiring eyes in which he still stands as the chief of heroes—is to a man of Maurice Brady's temperament not merely a want, but an absolute craving necessity.

Since the day he had left her half fainting

upon the rocks, they had hardly seen anything of one another. Once when he had joined her for a few minutes on coming out of mass, it had seemed to him that she shrank away — probably, he told himself, from fear of a quarrel arising between him and some of the O'Brien faction. He, too, had a keen dislike to anything of the sort, and this had prevented him going to see her at the cabin. Now, however, he resolved that he must do so. Apart from his own imperious need of her, it was absolutely necessary that they should have a serious talk before the trial came on. His first intention of shielding her had given way by this time to a realisation of the absolute necessity of her appearing as a witness. No summons had as yet, he believed, been issued, but he was aware that one would have to be. His own evidence, in fact, depended largely upon being supported by hers, and it would be essential, therefore, to prepare her mind for this necessity.

Not without an effort—for his memory was naturally a tenacious one—he had succeeded in placing his brother's fate, and his own duty as the avenger of that fate, in the very front of his consciousness, and of fixing all his thoughts upon it. It was the only plank of self-respect which he had now to cling to, and to secure such a plank was, to a man of his type, an absolute necessity. The very price he had paid for it decided that. To take a step which ruins your whole life, brands you in every one's eyes as a heartless traitor, leaves you the mark for every kind of insult and reprobation, and after all fails—recoils with annihilating effect upon yourself, but hurts absolutely nobody else! Could anything be conceived more utterly unendurable to a man to whom power in some form or other had always been the one possession which his soul imperiously craved—the vision of his whole life? He resolved that he would at once seek out Alley, explain the whole matter to her, and impress upon her the absolute neces-

sity of being guided, not by any of the O'Brien lot, but exclusively by *his* judgment and directions. Then, when he had made this perfectly clear to her and had received her promises, he would reassure her with regard to any of those fears which she might naturally have entertained as to his deserting her. Poor little Alley! Poor, soft, gentle, dependent creature! How happy it would make her to know that all was still right between them! that whatever else happened she would always have a protector—a kind, generous, affectionate protector in him! To be able to gratify one's own strongest wishes, and at the same time to perform a truly generous and magnanimous action,—surely this is the very climax of satisfaction!

CHAPTER VII.

TEAMPULL A PHOILL.

THERE was a spot, not a quarter of a mile from Hurrish's cabin, which was a favourite resort of Alley's, and near enough, fortunately, for her to be able to escape there and return almost without her tyrant perceiving her absence. It was a tiny valley, deep in the rich grass of the Burren, sunk like an open shaft in the middle of the rocks; and in the centre of this small enclosure rose, grey amongst the greenness, the remains of no less than five chapels and monastic buildings, ruined and roofless, but, with the persistence of their wonderful masonry, resisting century after century all the efforts of rain and wind storm to subjugate and utterly make an end of them.

Though later by some centuries than the barely human wigwam-like oratories of Gortnacoppin, their origin and the date of the original settlement of their monkish architects seem to be equally lost in the mists of the Atlantic. All that is known is that a certain St Mhic Duagh, after whom the oldest of them is called, lived here, and that the date of the newest and largest—known as Teampull a Phoill—is believed by experts to be about the middle of the tenth century. A small stream runs down the middle of this tiny valley—a gay, dancing, rippling thread of water, clear as crystal—glad too, apparently, of the sunshine and the freedom, but, like all other Burren streams and rivers, rushing back again underground, as if startled, with a wild hurry-scurry of excited bubbles, a few hundred yards lower down.

Coming upon it unexpectedly, there is something singularly winning in the aspect of this little grassy retreat—stolen, as it were, from the surrounding savagery. Ruined

as its buildings are, there yet lingers a distinctively human look about the whole—an air of expectancy and invitation—which somehow thrills the heart. The stream, the well, the bright yellow lichens of the walls, the broken cross which stood at the entrance of the “ahaliah” or sacred enclosure, the well-worn door-steps trodden into a curve, where century after century the naked or sandal-shod feet of the monks trooped to their daily portion of prayers,—the whole scene has a completeness, a look of habitation, that speaks of long usage. There is none of that cold and repellent grimness which generally hangs over such husks and shells of discarded habitations. Masses of honeysuckle and dog-roses hang from the crevices of the rocks ; the floor of the valley is blue in spring time with small dainty-flowered harebells, or white with tiny bed-straws. Huge flowering leeks—a legacy, it is said, of the monks—stand crowded into a sheltered corner ; and in the actual doorway of the largest church an ash-seed—fallen

Heaven knows how or from where — has taken root between the top of the jamb and the next stone to it, sprung into a tree — the largest possibly in the Burren — and, summer after summer, waves its feathery festoons in youthful verdant triumph over its time-worn protector.

Alley loved this little glen with a sort of personal love. The sternness of those interminable platforms of rock above pained her eyes, the wide-reaching panorama chilled her spirit, but this little enclosed spot, speaking of peace, faith, long continuance, filled her mind with images of a tender and homely tranquillity.

One morning, a few weeks after Hurrish had been committed to prison, and not very long before the time fixed for the trial, she had finished her work early, and had betaken herself here as usual, carrying her knitting with her. It was one of those sunless, rainless, vacant-looking days, very characteristic of these western solitudes. Further inland it would probably have been hot, but

here, upon the very brim of the Atlantic, the air was alive, though there was very little of it—hardly enough to stir the grass, or the leaves of the great tree-mallows which rose in a towering cluster out of the nettles by the little well. It was wonderfully dreamy in that narrow flowery nook in the middle of the desolate Burren. All the bees that ever visited that unprofitable hunting-ground seemed to have collected about the masses of yellow trefoil which linked the grass and rocks; a pair of water-wagtails were flirting upon the brink of the stream; a flight of fieldfares kept precipitating themselves like schoolboys, now to one side, now to the other, of the glen; and overhead the wild remote cry of a passing sea-gull fell from time to time upon the ear.

Alley was feeling tired, and glad to get away from the harsh, raucous voice of her old tyrant—glad to rest in the warm soft air, so comforting and so kindly. She sat quietly for some time upon the edge of the

well, with her knitting in her hand, looking down into the water. Though called a well, it was in reality a spring, bubbling freshly out of the ground, and enclosed with a low wall consisting of single blocks of stone laid side by side without mortar. A collection of queer-looking objects lay at the bottom, which, upon closer inspection, were seen to be fishing-hooks, buttons, bits of tape, needles and pins, and similar articles, thrown in from time to time as votive offerings. Alley looked down at them meditatively, wondering who the different ones had belonged to, and what their owners had wished to get in return for them. The fish-hooks no doubt were for St Mac Dara, the chief Connaught patron of fishermen, to whose chapel upon the Oilian Mac Dara opposite all passing sails were bound to lower twice, on pain of speedy shipwreck. The buttons and tapes had nearly melted away, and the needles and pins had become so rusty that they might easily have been mistaken for small twigs or straws. It looked, Alley thought, as if

the saint upon whom they had been bestowed had not found any use for them.

Sounds travel far in stony and vacant regions like the Burren, where there are no houses, trees, or fences to break it. Alley had not sat very long upon the edge of her well before a sound reached her,—a sound of footsteps, first in the distance, then drawing nearer, and evidently coming directly towards her. There was no path to the glen, and so completely was it out of the ordinary track that except when, under some special impulse of devotion, a woman came and threw a pin or button into the well—an event which rarely happened—she had the place to herself. Who could it be? she wondered. A man evidently, by the tread. Her thoughts flew instinctively to Hurrish, and then stopped short with a sudden pang. Whoever else it was, poor Hurrish, alas! it certainly could not be.

She was not long kept in doubt. Another minute and Maurice Brady's head appeared on the ridge above, near where a gap left between the rock and the wall of one of the

chapels led into the glen. He came down the narrow passage with a slow, deliberate step, reached the cross which stood in the centre of the little valley, and stood there, his arms crossed in his favourite Emmet attitude upon his chest, looking down at her without speaking, while she, on her side, looked up, startled, wondering what he was going to say. Had anything fresh happened? Why had he come there to look for her, she wondered?

Certainly a magnificent actor, no less than a magnificent demagogue, was lost in Maurice Brady! He had all the dramatic instincts, the realisation of the value of "pose," the ready alternatives from appeal to denunciation, from denunciation to appeal, the cold, quick, dominating eye, necessary for the histrionic side of the latter part. His present intention was to overawe, and even, if necessary, a little alarm Alley, in order the better to impress upon her the absolute necessity of obeying his directions, and abiding by his judgment in contradistinc-

tion to that of any of the O'Briens. Then—when he had firmly established this in her mind—he would reward her by suddenly relaxing into greater tenderness, a warmer show of affection than he had ever exhibited before. He had an intense need, as we have seen, of finding some one over whom he could still rule—with whom his influence was still paramount,—a soft, tender, yielding some one, who would soothe his smarting egotism, repay his lordly kindness with a woman's tenderness—above all, admire and love him. It was impossible for him to suppose that Alley had ceased to do so—ceased to look with pride to the thought of being his wife. What he conceived was that she had been teased, threatened perhaps, into promising to do everything in her power to screen Hurrish, should she be called upon as a witness. And this he felt that it behoved him to put a stop to at once—firmly, emphatically.

“It's a long while since I've seen you, Alley dear,” he began, gently.

“Yis, indade, Maurice.”

“This has been a bad time for us all, Alley!”

“’T has indade, Maurice.”

Then there was a little pause before he began again.

“I’m sorry to have to let you stop on there”—pointing his finger in the direction of Hurrish’s house. “And if I could have taken you out of it, you should have been took before this, but, please goodness, you’ll not be in it long now.”

He had planned this speech beforehand, as the most effective method he could conceive of proving to her that she would be expected to give up all future connection or intimacy with the O’Briens. Alley, however, merely opened her great eyes wonderingly.

“An’ why wudn’t I shtop in it, Maurice? Sure where ilse have I iver shtopped?” she inquired, simply.

It was not a particularly easy question to answer, seeing that there was nowhere else for her to go to, and that she certainly never had “shtopped” anywhere else. It

irritated Maurice into quitting his calm tone for a more authoritative one.

“ You can’t *wish* to stop in the house of a man that’s done what Hurrish has, surely, Alley ? ” he said, energetically. Then, as she still showed no symptoms at all of agreement, “ Is it in the house of a *murderer* ? ” he added, harshly.

Alley winced, and quivered from head to foot. The bolt went straight home, and shot its cruel dart through and through her delicate sensitive frame. They were terrible words for her to hear—they were cruel ones too, and, to her thinking, wicked ones, angering almost as much as they frightened her. All the more for their very cruelty—nay, for their very truthfulness—she gathered her powers to resist them. A tinge of pink colour came into her cheeks, and her soft eyes looked up steadily at him.

“ I’d shtop in Hurrish’s house, let him hav dun what he wud,” she said, resolutely.

Maurice started and stared open-mouthed

and speechless. Such overt rebellion was the more astonishing from being so utterly unexpected. That every one else in the neighbourhood was fiercely opposed to the part he had taken against Hurrish, he was aware, but that *Alley* should also have espoused that side of the quarrel, had not even occurred to him. She was *his* property, not Hurrish's; what he did, she must think right; what he thought, she must think also; were they not all but man and wife? The case evidently called for severity.

He came a step nearer, and fixed his eyes upon her with an air of authority. She must be made to understand what she was risking by her rebellion.

"Attind to me, Alley, and mind what I'm saying, for I always keep to my word," he said, in a tone of impressive displeasure. "What I say I won't go back of again,—no, not for all the begging and the praying in the world. So sure as you stop in that there man's house one minute longer nor I give you leave, so sure everything will be at an

end between you and me for good and all. I'd throw you off same as I would an old shoe, if you was to dare disobey me. You're not to listen to any one else at all, only to me. You're not to obey any one at all, only me. You're to remember that you're to be my wife, and that if you ain't obedient, everything will be at an end between us, out and out. Mind that, for I always mean what I say, and more, too."

He expected an instant change. Tears, promises of absolute obedience, entreaties that if he would only forgive her, she would obey him in everything,—their courtship had been largely made up of that sort of thing. Nothing of the sort came, however. Alley stood still, trembling, it is true, and clenching her two hands tightly together, but when she spoke her voice was firm enough.

"Thin, maybe indade, Maurice, t'ud be bether so," she said softly.

He sprang back as if she had flung something at him. His expression changed. The

air of calmness and authority fell off like a badly fitting dress, and the natural passion of an undisciplined and under-civilised man came to the front. She defied him, did she? This girl, this puny creature, whom he had drifted into loving, he hardly knew how. She joined the rest of them—the curs! the cowards! who had turned against him,—she threw him off, she *dared* to do so! He stood and glared at her as a wild beast glares before it springs.

In Maurice Brady's despite, Alley, as it happened, was looking especially lovely that day. The innocent wild-flower face, with its great pathetic eyes, had that glow and soft transcendent flush which it seemed often, like the clouds, to catch from something external to itself—something which filled and irradiated it. Standing before him, with her two bare feet upon the grass, her soft face upraised in piteous entreaty to his furious one—the misty gleams of sunlight falling upon her dark uncovered head,—poor red-petticoated Alley was a poet's dream, the

very picture of an ideal purity and innocence confronted with dark and unknown dangers. Now Maurice, for his misfortune, was intensely susceptible. He had that keen relish for feminine loveliness which seems, for some reason, to be but rarely bestowed upon his class. He ground his teeth savagely at the thought of her escaping him. Never before had he so realised her beauty; never before had he realised how strongly his mind was set upon that beauty being his,—his very own,—his chattel,—his private personal property, like his dog or his cow. A hot furious jealousy of Hurrish—one which, despite their relationship, had often secretly smouldered before,—sprang up suddenly, as if at a touch, to full maturity. She loved him—he felt sure of it. She mightn't know it, probably did *not* know it, but it was the fact all the same. As long as their interests had gone together she had been true to himself; now that they were severed she flung him off, without a word or a qualm. In a nature like Maurice Brady's, jealousy for a long time,

perhaps for ever, may be kept at bay. Pride, an innate certainty of the superiority of his own claims to those of any other claimant whatsoever, prevents his succumbing to it. Let this supreme certainty, however, once be broken down, and the same pride which would have kept the idea of rivals far from his thoughts becomes a lash to drive him to distraction, a barb in the side of his anger. It was so now. His love, which had hitherto been a placid possession enough,—a sort of small side rill, flowing half disregarded beside other and more serious currents,—suddenly became a consuming torrent, taken up into the main channel of those others, and outswelling them all. Rage, jealousy, desire,—three fierce devouring wolves,—all bore down upon him at once. He could have caught Alley to his arms, in her own despite, and strained her to his breast in jealous revenge and passion rather than love. He did not do so, however. The “cake of custom” is strong, happily, even over a man who considers himself to be

superior to it; and purity is still, thank heaven, the distinctive note of the Irish peasant in such relations. Though custom and instinct restrained him in this particular, to be brutal in another way came unfortunately only too easily and too naturally to him.

He came close to her, his dark eyes gleaming savagely out of a face distorted with passion.

“D’ you know what I’ve a mind to do, and what I’d do if I did what was right, Alley Sheehan?” he said, with the slow deliberation of concentrated fury. “I’d kill you this minute as you stand there, and leave you dead upon that grass at my feet. Why shouldn’t I? What’s to hinder me? You arn’t *fit* to live. D’ye hear what I say—not *fit* to live. You’re a wicked girl—a bad, heartless, wicked girl! A girl who goes back of her word isn’t fit to live. Arn’t you all one and the same thing as my wife, and a wife that turns against her husband is a disgrace to the earth, and will

go to hell when she dies! Ask your priest else."

He paused a minute to gather breath, and then went on, this time apostrophising rather than directly addressing her.

"A girl that no one else would ha' looked at! A girl without a shoe to her foot, or a penny to her fortun', or larning, or manners, or a thing! A girl that was nothing nor a drudge; living on charity — and what charity?—bits, and scraps, and dirty ends of things, that nobody else, not the pigs, would touch, and batings with that! And I that was ready to make her me wife, and a *lady*, and give her the best of eating, and drinking, and clothes, and everything. And what do I get? Nothing but ingratitude — black, wicked, heartless, grovelling ingratitude." (The last adjective was not perhaps precisely what he meant, but, like other orators, his stock of that commodity had its limits.) "She'd rather stick by Hurrish O'Brien, that's kept her in rags and misery, than be learned by me, and do as I

bid her ! If such a one doesn't deserve killing, there never was one in this wide world did yet. But"—and he put his face nearer to her, and ground the syllables slowly out one by one—"But I'll *not* kill you, Alley Sheehan, and I'll tell ye why. If I did, you couldn't bear witness against Hurrish O'Brien, and 'tis that you'll have to do next Tuesday three weeks. It's you'll be called first of all, and 'tis on *your* evidence they'll hang him—d'ye hear me, *hang* him. 'Taint no good your thinking you'll get him off with lying either, for that will only make them harder on him nor ever. If you'd been true to me, I'd have saved you all I could, and maybe not have told what you said to me down by the rocks yonder, but now I'll go straight to Ennis, and tell them that's there every word of it—how you told me that Mat was dead, before any one else knew. And they'll know the reason why. That it was because you *knew* Hurrish had done it ; and 'tis my belief you *seen* him do it, for you was always bitterest of all against Mat, that might have

his faults, poor fellar, like another, but wasn't a murderer anyway, like Hurrish O'Brien!"

Poor Alley! She had sunk upon the grass, her lips apart, her face ghastly white and almost devoid of expression, as, with the stupefaction of utter misery, she gazed blankly at her tormentor. Maurice felt no pity however. His own rhetoric had quickened and intensified the sense of his own wrongs, as the way of such rhetoric is. He felt *glad* she suffered—glad that her punishment had already begun. It was all true, every word that he had said to her. She *had* vowed to be his wife, and she had gone back of her word, and Hurrish *had* killed his brother, and it was his duty and his right to avenge him. He looked at her for a minute longer, then turned and walked deliberately away toward the narrow passage leading out of the glen.

Suddenly Alley's lips moved, and a sound came from them,—a single word repeated over and over again. "Maurice!"

“ Maurice ! ” “ Maurice ! ” she cried, like one under the torture.

Involuntarily he paused, and looked back. A misty gleam was streaming through the narrow doorway of the little Teampull a Phoill, shining upon the golden lichen of its roofless walls—upon the tall gable ends, upon the well with its wall, and the tiny rippling stream. There was an indescribable look of appeal about the whole scene—that wistful yearning expression which such ascetic scenes sometimes assume—as it were a cry from man to God, from God to man, an appeal for peace, hope, mercy, for a tenderer and kindlier humanity. Alley kneeling there—her white face upraised in piteous entreaty—seemed to echo and intensify this appeal ; the appeal which, at all ages of the world, and from innumerable lips, has gone forth wherever man—the erring, the feeble, the ignorant—affects to judge and to condemn his brother man.

“ Maurice, for God’s sake ! For the sake ov th’ holy crass beside ye, and the blissed

Vargin that's over us all—be marciful !” she cried. “ Sure ye wudn't do it, you couldn't, you'd niver have the heart ? Is it Hurrish ? Hurrish that was allays so good to you an' to me, an' to ivery wan that come nigh him. Think of thim poor little childer, Maurice ! Wud ye lave them widout a dada to put bread in their mouths ? And for *me* to be the wan to spake against him ! to sware away his pricions life ! whin ye know I'd rayther rin into the say fust an' be drowned —God forgiv me for sayin' such a thing ! Till me ye didn't mane it, Maurice ! Till me you wudn't go for to do such a thing ! Sure, I know you've the good heart if ye'd only let yerself hear it spake. Don't we want to be gettin' marcy all of us, an' how 'ul we iver hope to get it if we don't show none fust ? ”

He had stood still, riveted, in spite of himself, by her look and words. They did not soften him, however ; on the contrary, they made his desire for revenge burn deeper. She had turned against him ! This soft,

supplicating creature, who looked so gentle and yielding—whom he had regarded, and regarded still, as his own—his thing, his creature, his property ! It was because of *Hurrish's* danger, and for *Hurrish's* sake, that she was imploring him, not for any other reason. The last drop of venom seemed infused into the bitter current of his soul.

“ I'll *not* have marcy,” he said sullenly. “ D'ye think I'm going to let him kill my brother and get off without anything ?—go off and kill some one else most like ! I hope to God he will be hanged, and I'd go any distance, if it was to the very end of this world, to see it done, so I would ! ”

Alley's eyes widened slowly with horror. Then the very extremity seemed to give her courage, for she got up from her knees and stood erect, trembling, but facing him.

“ Then I'll not ask ye again, Maurice Brady,” she said. “ An' 'tis yersel' 'ul be the worse for it an' not Hurrish, for I don't believe God 'ul iver let him be killed, for

He's merciful if you're not, an' He knows that Hurrish is not a bad man, whatever he may do when the timper's on him. An' I'm not afear'd for all ye say, for there's One I've put me trust on, that 'ul bring him out of this, spite ov the worst you can do."

She was not thinking of any earthly assistance, but he thought that she knew, as he himself in fact did know, that the chance of Hurrish being really condemned was, under the circumstances, a very remote one, and this, and the reproach of her words together, put the apex to his fury.

"He may get off at Ennis, then, for there's liars and vagabonds everywhere," he almost screamed; "but if he does, he'll not get off from *me*, and so you may tell him! I'll hunt him down same as I would a mad dog! He needn't hope to escape me—not if he were to go and hide himself under the sea itself!" He was still standing beside the cross, and, with that strongly dramatic instinct that ran through his whole nature, he now turned deliberately towards it. "Sure

as God made me, and sees me now, and seen him kill my brother Mat, so sure I swear, if he gets off at Ennis court-house, I'll do for him yet ! Night or day, early or late, sooner or later, by God's help or the devil's help, *some way or other*, I'll do for him ! There, I've *shworn* it !" and he struck his hand down violently upon the broken top of the cross.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE COURT-HOUSE AT ENNIS.

ALL day long in the crowded court-house, in the dust, and the heat, and the glare. Faces everywhere. Cold, decorous, indifferent faces; faces framed in wigs; polite faces surmounted with well-brushed hair; faces rising serene above black broadcloth and white spotless linen. Behind and on either side faces, too, more faces, nothing but faces. Wild, unkempt, excited, perspiring faces, packed close as cattle in a cattle truck. A few familiar ones here and there. Old Phil Rooney, looking odd and unnatural in his loose grey hair, without the inevitable battered high hat. Father Denahy, close at hand, broad, friendly, and genial, a very sustaining point in the confusion. Hur-

rish, a long way off, pale and strange-looking, with a policeman on either side. Bridget, excited but awed, with a huge black shawl over her tousled hair. These were some of Alley Sheehan's experiences of Ennis courthouse on the day of the trial of Horatius O'Brien for the murder of Matthew Brady.

She had been put into the witness-box about one o'clock. Bridget, half mad with excitement, had flown at her like a vulture a little while before, and had hissed directions into her ears. She was to do this, not to do that; she was to say this, not to say the other. Alley, however, hardly heeded. She was very tired, and dazed with the crowd and unaccustomed surrounding, but she was wonderfully calm. The scene with Maurice had left upon her mind a sort of exaltation—a sense of inward support. Seen by herself, detached from the crowd around, her sweet young face, with its peculiarly nun-like look of innocence and purity, produced an immediate effect, and a slight murmur of admiration made itself heard.

She was asked how she had known that Matthew Brady was dead before any one else had done so, and had been made to describe coming upon his dead body in the glen, and running back to the cabin to tell Bridget. Then there was a few minutes' pause, and she began to wonder whether it could be all over. Every pair of eyes in the whole building was fixed upon her. For her own part, however, she saw no one distinctly, it was all a mist and a confusion. Then the counsel for the prosecution arose—a stout, burly man, the native humor-ousness of whose expression was only partially modified by a sense of his own importance.

“Now, my good girl, listen to me, and be very careful what you say. Who did you see in Gortnacoppin valley that morning besides the dead man?”

“Ne’r a one ’t all, plaze, sor.”

“Ne’r a one ’t all? Now be careful. Think! On your oath, did you not see Hurrish O’Brien?”

"'Dade no, sor ; I never seen a sight ov him."

"Where did you see him last that morning?"

"At the dure."

"What *dure*?"

"Th' house dure."

"What did he say to you?"

"Said he was goin' to Ballyvaughan, sor."

"Anything else?"

A blush flew over Alley's soft cheek, leaving it as pale as before.

"Said somewhat 'bout Maurice Brady," she murmured.

The last words were so low that no one in the court heard them except the counsel for the prosecution, who was nearest, and he only the last one.

"Said something about Brady, did he? Come now, my good girl, what was it?" he said, with an air of elation.

Alley did not blush again ; she hesitated and looked unhappy.

“Come, come, my good girl; no prevarication. Tell us what it was.”

“Said he had a good hart, sor,” she murmured.

The counsel’s jaw dropped, and a laugh, beginning amongst those in front, and spreading quickly to the crowd behind, ran round the whole court.

“*Said he had a good heart?*” he repeated, in a tone of mystification. “Nonsense, my good girl; don’t be wasting the time of the court like that. He couldn’t have said anything of the sort.”

“He did indade, sor.” Alley’s great eyes were lifted for a moment to her interrogator’s face, and their expression of limpid truthfulness it was difficult to gainsay.

“Nonsense, I tell you! Impossible! Why, we know that they were always enemies.”

“Is it he an’ Maurice? Sure Hurrish an’ Maurice was allays frinds, sor, allays—lastways, till now,” she added, with a sigh.

“Oh, Maurice! It was *Maurice* Brady he said had the good heart?”

“ Yes, sor—Maurice.”

“ Oh, pooh, we’re not here to make any inquiries about Maurice Brady’s heart ! Go on, and tell the court what else Hurrish O’Brien said to you that morning.”

“ Nothin’ more, sor.”

“ Which way did he go when he left you ? ”

“ Straight on over the racks, sor.”

“ Would that way take him through the Gortnacoppin valley ?

Alley hesitated again, trembled, cast a wild despairing look around for help, then, as no help was forthcoming, murmured piteously, “ Yis, sor.”

“ Very well. Now, that second time when you came back with Bridget O’Brien, what happened then ? ”

This was really the perilous point. Fortunately for Hurrish, nothing at all had transpired about the stick. It had been sought for, but not until the next day, when it had been found in its usual place in the corner of the cabin, where old Bridget’s instinct had told

her to replace it. Any of the men who had seen him at Ballyvaughan could, of course, have sworn that he had been without it there; but then no one, equally of course, had chosen to do so.

Alley trembled. She, too, knew the peril well enough. She had not yet seen Maurice Brady, but she felt instinctively that his eyes were upon her as she spoke. Had she been subjected to a sufficiently severe cross-examination, it is almost certain that her innate truthfulness would have betrayed her, and that she would have revealed something. As it was, she had only to repeat what she had already said — namely, that she was frightened and afraid to look again at the dead man, and so ran away and hid herself amongst the rocks by the sea.

There were a few more questions, but nothing further of any consequence was elicited, and she was allowed to leave the witness-box and return to her former place.

Father Denahy received her, spoke encouragingly, and found a place for her be-

side himself in a corner where she was a little screened from the pressure of the crowd.

She hardly heard what Bridget, who was the next witness, said, though, from the shouts of laughter that ran round the court, it was evident that the old woman was affording that entertainment so dear to the hearts of *habitués* at Irish trials. Suddenly she saw that Maurice Brady was in the witness-box, and lifted her head in terror, and tried to listen. She could not, however, distinguish very much. He looked excited and eager, and spoke rapidly with an air of authority and importance. Then another gentleman in a wig—not the one that had questioned her—got up, and it seemed to her that Maurice was annoyed by the questions he asked, for she could see his face flush and his brow darken angrily. A sullen murmur greeted him as he, too, stepped from the witness-box, but this demonstration was speedily put down. Then more witnesses, one after the other, appeared, popping up like puppets in a puppet-show, though whether

they were speaking for Hurrish or against him Alley could not make out. She was very tired, worn out by the long drive in the early grey of the morning, and the long day in the hot and crowded court-house; worn out, too, by all that she had gone through beforehand. Her head nodded wearily, and at last fell back against the chair. Father Denahy had had to leave her, in order to go and give his evidence in favour of Hurrish's general character, which was also confirmed by Major O'Brien and by young Thomond, who had insisted upon being allowed to get into the witness-box. Of this Alley, however, heard little or nothing. She was not sleepy, but she had reached that point of weariness when everything becomes dream-like. It was perhaps only a horrible dream, she thought, that Hurrish was being tried for murder. His face she saw distinctly; all the rest was blurred, misty, undistinguishable.

At last the witnesses ceased popping up, and then one of the wigged gentlemen rose and began to speak—"Buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz,"

his voice went on for hours—days as it seemed to Alley. At length, however, it came to an end, but immediately afterwards another got up and began a fresh “Buzz, buzz, buzz,” all over again. At last this, too, ceased, and then there followed a long delay. She had been given a piece of bread, which she broke a bit off mechanically from time to time and put into her mouth. The court-house had now to a great extent become empty. The gentlemen with wigs had nearly all gone. Hurrish, too, had been taken away by the two policemen, and there was a great vacant place in front of her where the crowd had lately been. The jury were deliberating.

Alley did not leave. She remained where she was, for Father Denahy had decided that it was best so. The comparative coolness revived her, and she looked up at the window in front of her. Through the dirt and manifold cobwebs she could see a little bit of pale blue sky and a bird flying by. It seemed strange somehow that there should be birds and sky still outside. It made

her think of Teampull a Phoill, and she tried to say a prayer, but could not for the life of her remember any. Bridget, wrapped in her big shawl, was rocking herself to and fro on a bench, muttering what sounded like curses between her teeth. Alley looked at her, and would have liked to say something to comfort her if possible, but was afraid—she looked so appallingly fierce and forbidding.

She was aroused by a fresh bustle around her,—a fresh tramp of hasty feet pouring into the court-house. The gentlemen in wigs were all coming hurrying in again. The judge had taken his place; Hurrish was being hastily replaced in the dock. All eyes were fixed upon the door by which the jury were about to return.

At last it opened, and the twelve appeared. The foreman stepped forward. He opened his mouth to speak—a cough! Opened it again—a second cough. What a moment for a man to be affected with a catching in his breath! Opened it a third time; and this time a word came out—“Innocent.”

It was caught up by a hundred voices—hoarse, shrill, guttural, declamatory. A buzzing as of ten million imprisoned bees and wasps, suddenly escaping from a bag, filled the building. Every frieze-coated man in or near the court-house shouted it at the top of his voice to his neighbour; every arm was waving excitedly; every coat-sleeve bursting at the shoulder—all Irish coats seem to have a tendency to give way at the arm-holes; every one struggling madly to get out into the open air at once. Alley was helped to her feet by Father Denahy, who took her by the arm and almost carried her through the crowd, warding off any excited elbows which otherwise might have hurt her. Old Bridget was just in front, making her way by the aid of her own redoubtable fists and elbows. They were outside now, in the open air, so cold after the close and suffocating air of the court-house. Another minute and Hurrish himself appeared, escorted by a couple of constabulary.

At sight of him a roar, as of a whole drove

of mad bulls suddenly broken loose, rose and mounted skyward. The entire crowd seemed to be convulsed. Big, broad-shouldered fellows were sobbing like infants, thumping one another violently for pure joy, cursing, shrieking, blaspheming—they did not in the least know why, but presumably for happiness. Old Bridget flung up her two wrinkled hands to heaven. Her attitude, however, was certainly not one of gratitude. She clenched her fists and shook them passionately, as if in triumph, at the sky, uttering shriek upon shriek as she did so, shrill and piercing as the whistle of an express train.

Alley was too scared and bewildered to join in all this excitement. She realised that Hurrish was safe, and so far was thankful, but she could not catch the contagion. He himself kept calm, too, amongst the commotion. The weight of the prison was perhaps on him still. He shook one or two of the hundred hands held out to him and thanked their owners, but looked around at the same time as if for a

way of escape—"There, there, boys ! aisy. Arrah, God bless yis all ! aisy !"—his voice was heard from time to time above the tumult in a tone of expostulation.

The car which had brought them from Tubbamina was waiting in the market-place, but it was impossible to get to it. A rush was made by the crowd to seize Hurrish and chair him round the town—an honour which he only succeeded by main force in evading. In every direction hands were held up and hats waved. People who had never seen him in their lives before, and would not have cared two straws if he had been comfortably hanged and done for, were apparently convulsed with joy, pouring out countless blessings upon his head, and in the same breath cursing the Government and the "polis."

All at once, and in the very height of the excitement, there came a new diversion—a fresh commotion. Alley did not know why all the people suddenly turned and ran back towards the court-house, or why faces

that a minute before had been wet with emotion, suddenly grew hard and hideous with ferocity. Hurrish knew, however. Maurice Brady had waited some time behind to allow the tumult to subside, but was now coming out of the court-house, and there was a general rush to get at him.

He ran back, and, with the aid of Father Denahy and one or two others whom they persuaded, rather unwillingly, to help, got between the crowd and their object, so as to try if possible to turn this new tide of popular excitement. Old Bridget was amongst the first that rushed back,—not with this object, however,—her gleaming teeth and outstretched hands keen and hungry for revenge. Alley for the moment was left alone in the street. In front she saw a dense sea of people—shoving, pushing, screaming, elbowing; striking out madly with sticks, and fists, and feet. Wild, hardly, as it seemed to her, human faces, seen sideways, with cheeks expanded and mouths protruding; hands held up, clutched,

brandished above the sea of heads; lumps of mud sent flying through the air, hissings, "booings"—a favourite weapon just then of offence—shrieks of women trodden on—the very houses seemed to her to rock and tremble with the tumult! Presently the crowd began to retreat backwards towards her. Alarmed, she retreated before them, and so they proceeded downhill towards the market-place. Suddenly, through a narrow lane opened through the people, she saw Hurrish and Father Denahy waving their arms and expostulating, and above—upon a flight of steps raised half a dozen feet over the rest—she saw Maurice Brady, white as a sheet, but looking down, with arms disdainfully crossed, at the bristling array of sticks and fists shaken menacingly in his direction. Then a squad of constabulary pushed their way rapidly through the crowd, shoving the people right and left, and rapping the more troublesome over the head or knuckles. The gap widened; a flying tangle of men, women, and children

came streaming down towards Alley. Frightened, she turned and ran before it, not knowing what to do or where she was going. Happily the market-place was wide enough to disperse the crowd, and she was able presently to find refuge in a small grocery shop, the proprietor of which allowed her to shelter herself, and here a quarter of an hour later she was found by Hurrish and Father Denahy, who came hurrying down in search of her.

Even now they were obliged to wait, as old Bridget was still missing. Father Denahy offered to go in search of her, leaving Hurrish with Alley. There was another half-hour's delay, and then the two appeared. Whatever antagonist the old woman had found to exercise her energies upon, it was evident that for once she had had her fill of fighting. Her hair was hanging about her in ragged wisps; one side of her face showed a long black bruise; one of her sleeves had been torn away, leaving the bony, stick-like arms bare. More seri-

ous dilapidation still, she had lost her black shawl, the hoarded treasure of years. She did not seem to heed it, however. Her eyes shone with the gleeful triumph of the victor, and she reeled along the road as if she were drunk, though, as a matter of fact, she had tasted nothing.

They mounted the car, Hurrish and Alley on one side, old Bridget and the priest on the other. The affray between the people and the police had already almost effaced the previous excitement about Hurrish, so that they were able to get away without difficulty, and almost without notice. Just as they were leaving Ennis old Phil Rooney ran up. He had come all the way to the trial in a donkey-cart, and was going back the same way, and did not expect to reach his own cabin till early the next morning. He was breathless with haste, and with the buffeting which he had encountered in the street, but his wrinkled old face beamed as he wrung Hurrish's hand, flourished his stick in the air, cut a wonderful caper in the dust

—he had been a noted jig-dancer in his day —then ran back and clambered into his donkey-cart, settling himself again amongst the straw, his legs stretched out luxuriously before him, the poor patient beast setting off immediately, as if aware that it had twenty weary miles of up and down hill to traverse before it reached its mouldy straw.

It was with a sense of intense thankfulness that Alley found herself away from all the people, out in the open country amongst the dull green fields and monotonous lace-work walls. As they were passing the trout-stream close to the town, Hurrish lifted his head and looked eagerly away to the west, where the Burren hills were faintly discernible in grey unevenness against a pale saffron-coloured glow. Then he inflated his lungs suddenly with a breath which seemed visibly to expand his frieze coat, and almost lift him bodily off the car !

Hardly a word was exchanged on the drive. At first Father Denahy's voice was heard in pastoral rebuke to the belligerent

Bridget. Finding, probably, that he was only wasting breath upon that unprofitable subject, he soon subsided into silence. Once, when they were passing a chapel, Hurrish, who had instinctively lifted his hand to his hat, turned with a sudden impulse to his companion.

“Ye said a bit ov a pray-er for me now and again, Alley, did ye?” he inquired in a whisper.

“I did, Hurrish.”

“I thought maybe y’ had.”

Then they relapsed into fresh silence.

After the sun had set clouds gathered thickly, and before they had done a third of the distance, the rain descended in a torrent, sending the dust flying before it in grey scuds along the road. Father Denahy unfurled a huge brown alpaca umbrella, and held it over himself and his companion. Hurrish looked at Alley with an expression of disquietude.

“What’ll ye do ’t all? Sure ye’ll be drowned,” he said, anxiously.

“Arrah, I’ll do well!” She had nothing at all over her head, and only a thin old woollen shawl above her cotton bodice.

He took off his own greatcoat and put it cloak-fashion around her, keeping the flaps for himself. When they had got within about eight miles of Tubbamina, a miserable heap of small wet arms and legs were discovered upon the road-side, which presently unrolling itself, turned into the two small boys, Clancy and Andy, who had run out all this way so as to be the first to hear the result of the trial. They were promptly picked up and put upon the well of the car, an elevation from which Andy soon slid down, and settled himself into a small pulpy bundle between his father and Alley. She let him wriggle till he had established himself comfortably against her shoulder, then spread out a piece of the capacious frieze coat and held it round him, so that he, too, might have a share of its shelter, and so rolled in a bundle together, they proceeded.

When she next peeped out of her own private corner of the pent-house, Alley's heart gave a sudden bound. Though it was nearly pitch-dark, she could distinguish the wet grey limestone of the Burren. She could see the flat tombstone-like platforms stretching in all directions, with huge boulders rising here and there like headstones. Her eye followed delightedly the crooked contortions of a fissure, as it sprawled its ugly length through the rocks, like some fragment of sea-shore, which, not content with keeping its proper place, had stretched inland over the entire country. To a stranger, nothing could possibly have been more grimly unattractive; to Alley it was home, peace, shelter. No more repellent to her imagination than the native uncouthness of some kind familiar face it has known from babyhood is repellent to the imagination of a little child.

CHAPTER IX.

SUNDAY IN THE BURREN.

THE next day was Sunday. When Alley got up, nearly an hour later than usual, and went to the door, the rain had vanished in a pale blue mist. The sun was shining brilliantly. The great flagged surfaces shone steel-blue with reflection; the little pools of water upon their indented hollows were of a ruffled lapis-lazuli. Across the valley the chapel bell at Tubbamina was ringing for matins, and the sound came faintly to her ear. The sea was smooth, or seemed at this distance to be so. Three "pookhauns," their small red-brown sails set to the fullest possible extent, drifted leisurely past the headland; the grotesque

prow of a coracle, lifted high out of the water, showing black as ink against the luminous satin-like surface.

Hurrish and the two boys had gone off to fish, but old Bridget still lay fast asleep in her private lair, the sound of her sonorous snoring filling the cabin. Alley half-dressed little Katty, and, leaving her in the inner room, went into the kitchen to see about preparing for breakfast. Hurrish had lit the fire, and put the pot on to boil, before going out. Accordingly, she went to the sack of oatmeal, filled a quart can with it, stirred it into the water, then returned and repeated the operation, singing softly to herself as she did so.

Bridget, whose snores had been growing more and more apoplectic, awoke suddenly with a final snort, and sat up and gazed round her, with the lowering air of some carnivorous animal unexpectedly awakened. Then, *fetching down a comb from some obscure recess, she made a clutch at a bundle of clothes, and began making her toilette where she

was, her skinny arms, bare to the shoulder, moving backwards and forwards actively as she did so.

Alley's singing had stopped instantly. Her terror of her tormentor was chronic, and never ceased entirely: she always had a feeling that Bridget might suddenly launch some unexpected missile at her—an incident not by any means, indeed, of unfrequent occurrence. Little Katty—her small garments still in a state of wild disorganisation—ran in from the other room and up to her, turning round to have some strings and buttons arranged. Alley knelt down on the floor to do so, thus bringing her face on a level with the child's. She was about to get up, her task finished, when Miss Katty—not a young lady generally prodigal of caresses—flung herself suddenly upon her, hanging on her neck like a round ripe plum, and rubbing her little warm red cheeks, as a kitten does, up and down the girl's pale satiny ones.

Old Bridget, with a scowl, lifted her vul-

ture-like face, and glared savagely at the pair. She was about to growl out something, when the doorway darkened and Hurrish appeared, the two small boys trotting briskly in his wake.

Breakfast that morning was quite a festivity! Hurrish had a string of fishes in his hands, which he proceeded to clean and prepare for broiling, taking down at the same time a large piece of bacon which hung over the chimney, and giving it to Alley to cut into slices for frying. She did so, and when the meal was ready waited upon them all, feeding Katty with a spoon, and settling a dispute between Clancy and Andy as to which was entitled to the last slice of bacon. Hurrish insisted, however, upon her sitting down and eating, heaping up a goodly portion upon her plate, and standing sentry over her until it was finished. By the time breakfast was over and the plates washed, it was time to begin to get ready for chapel. Bridget peremptorily declined going, probably on account

of the increasing blackness of one side of her face, the result of her martial efforts the day before. To Hurrish, as well as Alley, this decision was a relief. His mother's ferocious satisfaction in his escape from the clutches of the law did not gratify him, somehow, as much as might have been expected. It was so evident that her joy lay in believing him to have been really guilty of the worst, and to have escaped merely by dint of much vigorous equivocation, and by favour of a patriotic jury—not a view of the matter the pleasantest, perhaps, for him to contemplate.

With that reticence which is not incompatible with the most primitive degree of openness, he shrank from speaking upon the subject to her, and still more so to Alley. That the latter should have been mixed up in it at all, gave him indeed the keenest pain, the period of her cross-examination having been worse to him than all the rest of the ordeal put together. What the girl's private view of his guilt was, he could not of course tell, but suspected that she had come to real-

ise the matter pretty nearly as it really stood, and therefore rested in that belief. To himself the whole subject was full of quite unfamiliar pain, and with the indestructible light-heartedness of his race and type, he made haste therefore to throw it as far behind him as possible. The hardest thing thus to fling away and get rid of was the remembrance of Maurice Brady's share. Even this, however, after a while, he succeeded in doing. Either Maurice had felt it his duty, in some inexplicable way, to do what he had done, or he had been led away by temper, and for both alternatives Hurrish could feel a brotherly sympathy. They had now each something to forgive the other—there was a satisfaction in remembering that—and he cherished a hope that some day the two offences might, as it were, balance one another, and all be again as it had been before.

The scene at Tubbamina, as he came down to the chapel, with Alley and the two boys beside him, was in the style of his reception

outside the court-house the day before ;—the numbers, that is to say, were smaller, but the enthusiasm even greater. Sal Connor—whom it is to be hoped the reader has not forgotten—was one of the first to rush forward and pour out tears and exultations over his escape. Despite a succession of other swains who in the interim had laid siege to her hand—despite even his own hardened ingratitude—Hurrish still retained the foremost place in that unresenting damsel's affections. She had been one of the most furious against Maurice Brady,—indeed it was well for him that they had not chanced to meet, otherwise he would have stood a considerable chance of having to defend himself against her own maidenly hands. She had a new suitor now in attendance—a young gentleman from Limerick, engaged in the bacon trade—but it was evident to all intelligent beholders that it only wanted a word from Hurrish for that youth's chances to vanish utterly. A man just out of jail ! Other merits apart, what patriotic maiden's

heart could hope to withstand so irresistible a plea?

It was a long, long day of absolute idleness—*free* idleness!—delicious combination of words! Hurrish took Lep, and went off to the saleen, throwing himself down upon the sands there in an ecstasy which he would have been ashamed perhaps to exhibit before any more critical audience. Lep was sympathetic, however, and paid no particular attention, beyond wagging his tail and snapping sleepily at the flies. He had exhausted himself in enthusiasm the night before, and felt perhaps that it behoved him to regain a soberer and a less expansive deportment.

There was something luminous — almost, as it were, Biblical—about the scene to-day. The grey limestone hills, warm and faintly iridescent under the hot kisses of the afternoon sun, might have reminded a traveller of those other limestone hills, more memorable, for all their aridity, than the most favoured tracts of other lands. Hurrish naturally

did not think of this, but a suffused sense of wellbeing filled his soul, and by an association of ideas he looked across the sea to that point—a little south of the Aran isles—where the last well-authenticated sight of the O’Brasil is said to have been obtained. It was a position better laid down in the mental charts of the neighbourhood than half the genuine islands and sandbanks. Hurish himself was troubled with no doubts at all as to its existence. To have been so would have been to show himself in fact no better than an atheist, seeing that, as lately as the time of Phil Rooney’s grandfather, a young man, blown out to sea during a squall, had landed there, and been sumptuously entertained for three days by the inhabitants, who feasted him upon such rich viands as only the Blessed eat, and imparted to him, on leaving, many valuable secrets—“by which means,” says a contemporary chronicler, “some seven or eight years after, he began to practise both chirurgery and phisick, and so continues ever since to practise, tho’ he

never studyed nor practised either all his life before, as we that knew him from a boy can averr."

It was not till the shadows, thrown backward from the sea, were beginning to grow long and straggling, that he got up and began to retrace his steps, Lep following close at heels, as if in dread of his again disappearing mysteriously into space. When they had got within a quarter of a mile of home, Alley was discovered sitting upon the rocks, with little Katty beside her; Clancy and Andy tumbling about together, like a pair of young bears; the poor old donkey, who took Bridget to market and Hurrish's fish to Lisdoonvarna, also rolling comfortably upon a bit of green turf hard by, its four well-worn legs high in air, like some unusually dilapidated variety of bed-posts.

Alley was trying to teach the child to repeat her "Hails," whereas Miss Katty much preferred plucking the young leaves of sorrel which sprouted out of the clefts of the rocks, and nibbling them with her small front teeth,

making wry faces expressive of delighted disgust at their tartness as she did so. Hurrish stopped and sat down beside them, Lep moving a little way off, with rather a supercilious air. The colour rose to Alley's cheeks, as it had done each time the last two days Hurrish had come near her. It was the pleasure of seeing him free and safe again, she told herself; what else, in fact, could it have been? Certainly the character of *his* affection for her had sustained no change! The bare idea of being fond of her, in any other sense from that in which he was also "fond" of his own three-year-old Katty, had never dawned upon him, nor would probably have dawned upon him had they lived for a hundred years together. It would have been wrong, but, apart from that, it was not a direction in which his thoughts strayed, or had any temptation to stray. Why, he would have asked, should they do so?

Why indeed? There seems no answer one way or other, save the perhaps rather feeble and unsatisfactory one of national peculiari-

ties. Despite his susceptibleness in other directions, it really did seem as if Hurrish, like so many of his type, hardly knew whether a woman was handsome or the reverse. To be strong and active, to have a "clane skin,"—these he recognised as important points, but beyond these his perceptions rarely strayed. He had never dreamt of being "in love" with his own poor Molly Sheehan, though they had been the happiest of couples, and he had mourned her loss with a passion which would have left many a susceptible gentleman far behind. Perhaps it is as well. If that delusive Will-of-the-wisp, which makes wise men foolish and sober ones mad, were to exercise an equal ascendancy over such pieces of touch-paper as our friend Hurrish,—if he and such as he were to be as excitable in this direction as they are in some others—politics, to wit,—surely not all the rain that ever fell upon Ireland would keep that unlucky island from being in a state of perpetual conflagration !

It was a happy moment, but it came to

an end only too soon. The evening was closing in, the sun sinking like a red-hot cannon-ball into the grey, cool breast of the Atlantic. After a while, therefore, they got up, and proceeded homewards, Hurrish and Alley abreast, each holding a fat hand of Miss Katty's in theirs; then Lep, sniffing the air, and passing the still recumbent donkey with an air of superiority; the boys—scuffling and running after one another—bringing up the rear. The western sky was clear, and almost colourless, but upon the other side, beyond the intervening Burren hills, it was a mass of finely graduated colour. A multitude of arrowy flames, like the *disjecta* of some aerial volcano, were shooting their fiery points, one after the other, in a continuous flight across the zenith. They had attracted apparently even old Bridget's attention, for she was standing at the cabin door as the others approached, and looking up at the sky, an expression of fierce exultation lighting up her wrinkled face, which seemed to be inspired by some more

exciting idea than the mere contemplation of its beauty. "Red as the divil! red as the divil!" they heard her mutter to herself, as her eyes followed the blazing masses.

Hurrish nudged Alley's elbow. "'Tis the gran' fightin' she got yisterday she's thinkin' ov," he said, with a wink.

Alley tried to smile, but she felt a sudden shock, and her innocent pleasure fell dead. The old woman's look and manner frightened her. More, it gave her a vague sense of impending trouble—a sense of something about to happen of which others knew, though she did not. The serenity which, half an hour before, had fallen upon her like a benediction, vanished, and a cold fear took its place. She thought of Maurice Brady, and of his words and looks that dreadful day at Teampull a Phoill. Did he, could he have meant what he said then? she wondered, or was it only a cruel threat,—a way he had taken of punishing her? She had never found courage to repeat his words, chiefly from a childish feeling that the mere

fact of doing so might somehow tend to bring them to pass. She thought of them constantly, however, and always with fresh fear, always with a vivid recollection of his look and manner, which made it difficult to dismiss them as mere idle threats. They lay like a dead weight upon her mind—a weight which every sudden movement caused to press and hurt intolerably. Thus, though Hurrish was safe and out of prison again, the future was not by any means wholly free from clouds.

CHAPTER. X.

A FLASH IN THE DARK.

Two months had gone by since the day of the trial. Other and equally exciting scenes had occurred in the interval, so that it was no longer a matter of much interest even on the spot. It was a bad moment, in a bad year. Though the long nights had not yet come, there was a dangerous spirit abroad. The harvest had in many parts been bad, and a considerable harvest of another sort had been reaped from its failure. All over Ireland there had been scattered crimes, and rumours of coming outbreaks. In lonely cabins, far from roads, far from the possibility of help of any kind, frightened women were lying awake at night, trembling to see the

ill-protected door fly open, and blackened faces appear to drag away son, husband, father, to ill-usage, perhaps to death. On the hills around horns were sounding at the dead hours. The cries of tortured animals—not less audible, perhaps, for being inarticulate—had again and again risen for vengeance to the sky. The whole country was in one of its periodic fits of excitement, terror, revolt. Vague expectations were everywhere afloat, dreadful or hopeful according to the anticipations of the individual. In the more reckless and desperate spirits, a wild belief in the speedy oncoming of some glorious pandemonium, when the torch and carnage would stalk over the country; in the more passive, a vague unquenchable expectation of a millennium which would make them rich, happy, prosperous, as by a miracle. In more practical heads, an eager political ferment,—a feeling that old things had passed away, and all things had become new. Brave men were nervous; sober men excited; every one uneasy, uncomfortable,

restless. Nowhere stability ; nowhere confidence ; everywhere a feeling that ordinary routine was henceforward set aside. Of what use, it was asked, to slave one's self when one might at any moment become rich without doing so ? Still more forcibly, who but a fool would "dishtroy" himself working to pay the rent, when all the world knew that henceforth no rents would have to be paid at all ?

Clare has always claimed a prominent position in times of disturbance, and it was not behind its old fame on this occasion. Several barns had been burned, several obnoxious individuals waylaid and chastised, and there were warnings of more vigorous doings still. In no other part of Ireland had Captain Moonlight appeared in greater force or with more absolute impunity. An impalpable reign of terror—invisible, but none the less real—lay upon every one, and every man looked distrustfully at his neighbour.

Mr O'Brien had his full share of these troubles. No rent had been paid, of course ;

but that was merely a preliminary. Threatening letters had again begun to form an ordinary item of the morning's post-bag. The momentary popularity which he had won by his defence of Hurrish had flickered and died. That, it was felt, was after all only an isolated case, whereas his misdeeds were perennial and unintermittent: he asked for rent; he professed his determination to have it; he declared that he could not exist without it. Brave indeed would be the man that defended him!

Young Thomond was still at Donore, and was the hardest to convince that anything was seriously amiss with the state of the country. One evening, however, even his confidence got rather a shock. He had been pooh-poohing the alarms of the newspapers, declaring the Government and its myrmidons to be at the bottom of half the crimes reported. When night came, and his uncle had retired to bed, the whim took him to go for a midnight walk. It was a beautiful evening, warm and soft, with a moon sleeping peace-

fully over the sea, the whole world seemingly at peace and at rest. He turned away from the Burren, across the wider fields of the southern part of the property. As he was sauntering along, not far from the edge of a lane, his hands in his pockets, and his thoughts nowhere in particular, his attention was arrested by a mutter of tongues proceeding apparently from the ground below him. Startled, he approached, and stepping quietly up to the edge of a bank which skirted the lane, peeped cautiously over. Four men were crouched together under the opposite bank, which rose steeply above their heads. Two were lying at full length, the others squatting,—all with weapons—they might have been sticks, or they might have been blunderbusses—in their hands. Young Thomond held his breath, for he was aware that he had stumbled upon perilous ground, and that an incautious breath now would probably be his last. Presently up rushed a big sinister-looking man, exceedingly ragged, two wild bloodshot eyes looking out under

the tattered remnants of an old felt hat. The men in the ditch sprang up to hear what he had to say. Thomond listened too, but was unable to catch anything. The ragged man never ceased speaking, but he was hardly articulate, the gurgling syllables dying away half uttered in his throat, and never getting any higher. After a while all five crept stealthily away along the bottom of the ditch, their weapons protruding like stiff tails under their coats. Master O'Brien waited till they had all gone, and then went home considerably sobered, and was observed to be much less loud about the pacific proclivities of the county Clare for some days afterwards.

Alone amongst the Donore tenants, Hurish still maintained friendly relations with Mr O'Brien. This, which under other circumstances would have been a source of no slight peril to himself, was in his case allowed. There was a feeling that he had done his part, and might be allowed to rest upon his laurels—a theory which, it

may be said, entirely chimed in with his own views.

Of Maurice Brady nothing had been heard for some time. There was a rumour afloat that he had been engaged in more than one local misdeed—by way, perhaps, of wiping out the recollection of his late falling away from the popular ideal—but no proof of the fact had been forthcoming.

Meanwhile, in the Burren at any rate, the potato harvest promised to be excellent, and the corn—where there was any—had ripened as it had not ripened for years. It had been extraordinarily still for nearly a week, the whole coast seeming to be wrapped in deep dreamless sleep. The sea heaved, but its surface was hardly broken, the great rollers flinging themselves down as if exhausted when they reached the shore, and passing away immediately into stillness. The very gulls and kittiwakes seemed to have temporarily changed their character, and floated inertly about, like so many farmyard ducks, upon the surface. The

smoke of passing steamers trailed behind in a long-drawn lazy column. Now and then a catspaw would pass over the bay, beginning at the furthestmost point of Iar Connaught, turning the pale satiny greyness of the surface into a deeper tint, and then vanishing suddenly. Down at the rock-pools, however, which were protected against such incursions, the very stillness of death prevailed, the particles of water seeming to be literally glued together. Through this oily tenacious surface the inquiring claw of some predatory crab, prowling amongst the seaweed, might have been seen now and then to rise, gesticulating excitedly, like the hand of some one in the act of drowning, or those supplicating hands seen by Dante above the lake of pitch; then the broken surface would settle together again, and all would be stillness. On the fifth day, however, this unnatural calm gave way. Noises sounded in the air. Dark masses of cloud rolled over the sky, and vivid weather-galls—green, violet, and orange—appeared in

two or three directions. It was plain to every one who knew anything that dirty weather was coming.

Hurrish had left his coracle as usual on the small crescent-shaped strip of sand at the end of his own saleen. It was safe enough there in ordinary occasions, but in very big storms the whole of this space was covered with foaming monsters, rolling in through the narrow mouth, and rushing with fury against the cliff. The tide, however, was out now, so that there would be time enough for him to see about it before it returned. In the meantime, as the day drew in, and the suspicious symptoms increased, every effort was being made to save the little crop of oats, which had been begun to be cut the day before in the small triangular field nearest to the cabin. The whole family were out together,—the two boys, Alley, and old Bridget collecting the bundles, while Hurrish, and another man got in to help, laboured away with their sickles. They were all intent upon their work, when a sudden exclamation from

one of the boys caused them to look up. A solid-looking wall of lead-coloured cloud, with a thin, wicked-looking splinter of white light where the base touched the water, was stalking steadily in towards them over the face of the sea. Two of the Aran isles were already caught and swallowed up, while the third was just beginning to be engulfed in the maw of the monster. The Connemara mountains, which had been extraordinarily clear all that morning, had wholly disappeared, and the dark mass was now laying hold of the nearer headlands—Roundstone with its ragged retinue of islands, and the nearer Cashla; clearly before another ten minutes were past it would be upon them. They could see distinctly the jet-black layers of rain streaking the dun-coloured mass, a looser outlier of cloud sweeping away south like an advanced guard,—the sails of two or three “pookhauns,” which had been all but becalmed an hour before, standing out like small triangles of burnished gold against this sinister background.

The whole party loaded themselves to their utmost possible powers, and hurried to the cabin with their burdens—Hurrish and the other man speedily returning and setting to work desperately to cut down the corner of upstanding oats that still remained. By the time the rest were back, the storm, though still at bay, was creeping nearer and nearer. It was intensely hot. The perspiration poured down every face. The sun, shooting suddenly from behind a pair of round-backed clouds, blazed furiously as if excited upon the little field in its iron setting of rocks, then suddenly vanished, and was seen no more, and a hollow roll of thunder followed in a slow prolonged rumbling from the west.

By dint of desperate labour they got the work accomplished, though before the last arm-load was in, the rain had begun—huge single drops falling with a dull thud upon the dried-up surfaces of the rocks, and raising a round white puff of dust at every descent. It had got very dark, too, though it was not yet sunset.

Having packed the oats into a compact heap in the outhouse, Hurrish pulled on an old tarpaulin cape, kept for such occasions, tied his hat tightly round his head with a piece of string, and set off for the saleen. The moment he had gone, old Bridget called Alley and ordered her peremptorily to go and drive in the milch cow, which was tethered some distance away. She obeyed, though the rain was now coming faster, and she had no tarpaulin to put on, only her poor little thin woollen shawl, which ten minutes sufficed to drench. She had reached the place—a small green square shut in on all sides by low lace-work walls—when the long-delayed storm suddenly burst in all its strength. The darkness grew to blackness. The cloud-bank had touched the shore, and straightway the sea itself—everything, in fact, except the immediate foreground—vanished. Great sweeping gusts of wind bore down upon her, roaring into her ears, like so many angry messages delivered through speaking-trumpets, ceas-

ing suddenly, and then followed the next minute by another and a yet more reverberating roar.

Scared by the suddenness of the onslaught, Alley looked round for some possible refuge. Where she was there was not an atom, not enough to protect a bird or a rabbit. Lower down, however, a ledge of rock, projecting a little way outwards, offered a partial pent-roof. She ran towards it, and crouching amongst the dense growth of loose-strifes and ragweeds which had sprung up in the shelter, pressed herself close as possible to the rock, so as to gain all the shelter she could.

She was not long left in peace ! The wind, which had hitherto been due west, suddenly veered to the north, and the rain, instead of falling nearly horizontally as it had hitherto done, took a long oblique drift. It drifted into her shelter, soaked the flowers, blew further and further in, till there was now no more protection than in the open field. Every spot seemed to be flooded in an instant ;

pools stood out on the bare ridges, and a small torrent began to run along the hollow left at the base of the rock. What was she to do? If Hurrish had been at home she would have run back to the cabin. Alone she dared not face Bridget without the cow, and to attempt to lead it through such a storm was evidently impossible.

Suddenly she bethought her of Teampull a Phoill, which was only a little way off down the hill. She had never been there since the dreadful day of her interview with Maurice Brady. All her pleasure in its beauty and seclusion, all her sense of its peculiar sanctity, had been utterly destroyed and swept away by that terrible day. The image of Maurice Brady—his hand upraised to strike the broken cross—was the only one she now associated with it. The very sight of it was pain to her, and she had several times made a considerable circuit in order to avoid passing it. Some shelter, however, she felt she must have, and there seemed to be no choice except to go there, or to return

to the cabin, alternatives both about equally unwelcome.

It was not a moment to hesitate. The long slanting drifts had already saturated the front of her dress, and her cheeks were as wet as if she had been crying. A fresh gust sweeping roughly along the rocky channel decided her. She sprang up, scampered along the top of the ridge which had offered her such sorry hospitality, skirting the field where the cow, despite the storm, was still placidly grazing; ran down a long decline of rocks—the rain rushing after her and pouring in a small torrent between her feet—round another barricade of rocks, the last, and down the little narrow pathway which only just found room to squeeze itself through the defile, till she came to a standstill, panting, in the first of the ruined buildings, said to have been originally the refectory of the convent, a corner of which still retained a fragment of its original roof, consisting of small flat pieces of stone over-

lapping one beyond the other, and supported by the two end walls.

It was nearly quite dark here, for the storm had made havoc of the remaining daylight. Alley, however, knew her way as well as if it had been her own house, and could tell precisely the position of each of the stones, which lay in tumbled heaps over the ground. She found a dry spot at the very end, the furthest from the entrance, and sat down on a sort of ridge, tucking her feet under her, and shivering; the wind rushing in after her and tearing round and round the little enclosure; the rain spreading out like a grey lattice-work over the edge of the fragment of roof, the stones of which projected in an irregular tooth-like outline one before the other over her head.

She hoped that it would leave off soon, and that she would be able then to return and fetch home the cow, which even Bridget could hardly expect her to bring through such a tempest. There was no symptom,

however, of any cessation. The darkness deepened, but the rain only seemed to be growing heavier, and the wind to be steadily rising. Now and then a jagged flash of lightning lit up the gloomy little scene, finding its way to every corner of the ruin, playing bo-peep in and out of the black window-sockets, and making a luminous background to the tall gable-end, which rose in a peak over the doorway opposite.

Alley was not afraid, however, for the scene was too familiar, and even the lightning could not make it seem strange or formidable. She gathered her poor little cold body as comfortably as she could into a corner, laid her head against the wall, and waited patiently until she could effect her escape.

She had been there perhaps half an hour, when a sound reached her that did, however, alarm her—a sound of some one moving about in the space outside. She sat up, then went a few steps forward, and peered eagerly into the darkness. She could see nothing, however, for the two walls on this

side made the obscurity absolutely complete. She returned, therefore, to her former place, and remained there still as death, her heart beating, her eyes growing round with terror. Some one certainly *was* there, a man apparently, for she could hear his boots striking against the stones. Steps too were approaching, not hurrying wildly into shelter though, as might have been expected on such a night, but groping their way slowly and cautiously. She could hear them coming round the outside of the building where she was, and presently they paused, and a figure stopped short at the doorway opposite.

It was densely overgrown with ivy, which hung so low that a man would have had to stoop considerably in order to enter. Alley could distinctly perceive a dark outline against the greyness, but too vaguely to distinguish any traits. The unknown is always the terrible, and she held her breath, hoping, praying, that whoever he was, he might not come in. He did not do so, but passed on after a moment towards the west

building, which was that of Teampull a Phoill. There was a small window in her wall upon this side, and peeping through it, she could now distinctly see the figure of a man, and see, moreover, that he was holding something in his hands which he seemed to be trying to shelter from the rain. More than this she could not distinguish.

Another moment, and he would have been out of sight. She could see the black silhouetted outline making its way over the soaked grass, and getting gradually merged in the more comprehensive blackness of the ruin. At that instant, as fate would have it, another flash of lightning,—the most vivid there had yet been,—flung its melodramatic illumination over the whole scene. It gleamed upon the little ruin, throwing its low cyclopean walls, black hollows, and tall gable-ends into full relief. It shone upon the wet grass, swept flat with the beating of the rain; upon the well with its low wall; upon the encompassing rocks; upon the stream flowing in a thick brown torrent

down the middle of the little valley. It lit up the figure upon the point of retreating into the church, and as it did so, threw a momentary but unhesitating illumination right into Alley Sheehan's soul. The man skulking there before her was Maurice Brady, and the thing which he was sheltering under his arm was a gun !

CHAPTER XI.

THE WRONG SALEEN.

A STIFLED cry broke from her lips. She silenced it instantly, however. Her strongest most instinctive impulse was to avoid drawing Maurice Brady's attention to herself—not to let him know that she was there, and that she had seen him. But what had brought him? she asked herself in terror; what was he doing there? Above all, what was the meaning of that gun?

A sort of wave seemed to roll over her brain, and then to roll back again, and a flash, vivid as the flash of lightning, to carry conviction to her mind. It meant danger to Hurrish—that and nothing else was what it meant. Maurice Brady had sworn to kill

him—sworn it upon that very spot where they were standing—and now he was going to do it. The conviction rose clear as a revelation, and with it a corresponding determination to save Hurrish. She did not say to herself that duty required her to do so, but her whole heart flew out to him in agonised terror and in horror against the other. To get to Hurrish—only to get to him—to get him, if possible, into some place where he would be safe, and then to give notice to the police; to have Maurice seized, put somewhere, locked up—no matter how or where—so that he could not injure Hurrish;—these were the thoughts which flew, not coherently, but as it were panoramically, through her brain.

How to get away without being heard was the first question. She no longer thought of the rain—hardly knew, in fact, whether it rained or not. To get to Hurrish was her one thought, her one instinct. Cautiously she got up, and cautiously crept round the wall of the little refectory, feeling

her way along its stones to the entrance. Fortunately, with her bare feet, she could move almost unheard ; the wind, too, favoured her, and prevented any slight noise from being audible. She crept down to the doorway and peeped out. The fear of such another tell-tale flash as had unveiled Maurice Brady's presence was strong before her mind, and made her keep close under cover. She could see the confused dark mass of the church opposite. His figure she could no longer, of course, see, as he had gone inside. There was a window, though, in the wall, which told her that it would not be safe to attempt to escape upon that side. Were she to do so, and his eye to turn to the window at the moment she was passing, the chances were, she felt, that he would catch sight of her.

That being so, the only alternative lay between getting out of the small window in the wall furthest from Teampull a Phoill, or else clambering over a piece of the same wall which had got broken down, and part of which lay on the ground in a pile of

stones. She chose the latter, for the window was exceedingly small, so small that she feared that it might be impossible for her to get through it, at any rate without making a noise. There was a long slope of heaped-up stones upon either side, and a small piece of still solid wall rising out of the centre of this heap, the upper part being utterly destroyed. Feeling her way first cautiously with her hands, she mounted upon the wet pile, her bare feet giving her a firmer foothold than she would otherwise have had. Fortunately the stones had fallen years before, so that weeds had begun to bind them together. Even so, it was a difficult operation, particularly in the darkness, and against the tremendous hurly-burly of wind and rain which assailed her the instant she got her head above the breach. The first time she tried to clamber up the solid piece of wall, her foot slipped upon the slimy stones, and she fell, hurting herself considerably. She mounted again, however, immediately, and this time, by a great effort, managed to get her chest over the edge of

the wall ; then, to bring her knees on to a level with it. A minute after she was standing upon the top.

As she did so, another, though this time a fainter flash lit up the glen, and, to her terror, she saw that the window in her own ruin exactly faced the one in the ruin opposite, so that had Maurice Brady happened to be looking out, her outline would have been distinctly visible. In alarm she crouched down and waited while the dazzling flash faded, and the rapidly succeeding rumble of thunder also died away, and was lost in the distance. In the momentary lull that followed, she could feel her heart beating like a frightened rabbit's, expecting every moment to hear Maurice's voice, or his steps upon the stones below. After a while, however, as everything remained perfectly quiet, she concluded that she had not been seen, so prepared to get down upon the other side. The drop was very much deeper here, so deep that she could not catch a glimpse from where she was of the bottom. It might have been ten

feet or it might have been ten thousand for anything she could see.

A fresh terror seized her, and she half made up her mind to go back. The thought of Hurrish nerved her, however, and facing towards the wall, she resolutely leaned her chest and shoulders upon it, and let her feet drop out into the vacancy, stretching them lower and lower in hopes of touching the stones below. In vain. There was nothing except the wall itself, and in that not a single chink into which she could hook her feet; the old monks' work was too good, and still after all these years presented an almost absolutely unbroken surface to the elements. What she would have done had she been left to herself it is difficult to say, but at that moment the wind took the matter into its own rough hands. A compact gust, — the most violent that had yet come, — came tearing down the glen, whisking everything portable away before it, and shaking the very stones themselves in their sockets. It tore away poor little Alley's feeble grasp from the top of

the wall to which she had been clinging, causing her to fall helplessly on to the stones below, which, giving way under her feet, rolled away with her to the very bottom.

She lay for some moments upon the ground, stunned, and believing herself to be mortally injured. The sudden violence of the gust, and her own fall, made it seem more like some deliberate personal attack than the mere unheeding brutality of the storm. After a while, however, she gathered herself slowly up, the tears pouring from her eyes from pain. She was dreadfully bruised, and her poor little feet were badly cut by the stones, but there was nothing actually broken. A strong man falling in that way, and from such a height, would probably have received much more serious injuries, but she was so light that she had escaped comparatively easily.

As soon as she had realised that she was only scratched and bruised, her courage began to come back. Though she could not help crying with the pain of her bruises, she

struggled to her feet, and, forgetting the poor little shawl which had been torn from her by the gust, staggered up the track which she was close to now, and which led out of the glen on to the level rocks above.

She had to sit down again here under the shelter of a loose boulder to recover herself, for the force of the gale was so terrific, that she was afraid of being again knocked down. Her task was not yet quarter accomplished. Hurrish was still at the saleen. In order to see him, it would be necessary, therefore, for her to make her way across the rocks and down the cliff—a task which might well scare any one in the dark, and in the midst of such a storm as was then raging.

Like a good many other apparently feeble people, Alley, however, possessed a wonderful amount of passive courage. Pain and discomfort, too, were no strangers to her,—an amount of either which would have utterly deterred and paralysed one of a tenderer rearing, hardly counting at all. There was no time to lose, either. If she was to warn

Hurrish, she must do it at once. She must get him to come back with her to the cabin. Otherwise, the worst might happen before he received any warning at all.

Suddenly she fancied that she heard a sound in the glen behind her. Perhaps Maurice Brady might be following her—might get to Hurrish before she did ! That thought gave her courage, and leaving the shelter of the boulder, she struck boldly out across the naked rocks in the direction of the sea.

The wind was simply terrific ; there was no other word for it ! It seemed to meet her like a solid wall, driving everything before it as with a mighty besom. Over the naked, slightly inclined surfaces—flat to the eye—the water raced as over the beds of a mountain torrent, driven in sheets by the wind. They felt like ice under her naked feet, those cold, rain-washed rocks, sculptured along the edges in long narrow grooves and channels, like the half-melted edges of crevasses. Here and there compact masses of hawthorn, welded together by many a pre-

vious tempest, presented their dwarf strength successfully to the tempest. Everything else was blown flat, or swept bodily away. A number of sheep and lambs, huddled close together for protection under the edge of a lace-work wall, were bleating piteously, and could evidently barely keep their footing.

Alley faced it bravely. Her head down nearly to her chest; the solid sheets of wind-driven rain falling upon her bare head and neck, as if shot there through some direct-ing shoot. The wind seemed to meet her with determined animosity, as though it knew of her errand, and was resolved to prevent her from carrying it out. The blind monster set itself against her puny girlish strength with the brute determination of a bully. It seemed as if the gusts were no longer intermittent but continuous. She began to grow ill with the pain of her bruises, with the fatigue of the battle, with the eternal roar and whistle in her ears, with the sense of opposing ferocity, with the dreadful loneliness of this solitary unaided

tussle. Through it all, however, the thought of Hurrish drove her on. It was like a burning fire in her breast, and kept everything else at bay.

Long ago she was soaked to the skin, and had her skirt been of cotton, like her bodice, she could hardly have continued the struggle. Happily it was solid as a frieze coat, or a Highlander's kilt; and though, wet as it was, it pressed heavily round her waist, its weight prevented it from flapping. Her worst enemy was her own hair, which had got loose, and at every fresh gust struck her across the face with a blow which smarted like whipcord.

At last she reached the brink, made clear by the sudden rise of ground, and by the jagged broken edges of the rocks. She could see a slight yellowish lighting around the horizon, and could feel, rather than see, the great watery immensity below. But where was the path? Where was the saleen? Where were Hurrish and the boat? It was all a mist and a void, indistinguishable as waves,

or surf, or rain, or sea, or sky, or shore—a wild hideous chaos—as it were a gigantic yawn, in which the very earth itself seemed in the act of being bodily swallowed up.

Creeping cautiously along, almost upon her hands and knees, feeling her way round every rock, blown back continually by the wind, and almost stunned by the roar, she followed the edge, searching everywhere for the path. After nearly an hour thus spent, she, to her intense joy, hit upon it, and began to descend. It seemed very blind, and more impeded with rocks than she had thought, but this, in the confusion of the tumult, seemed only natural. Arrived at the bottom, she peered anxiously round her in the darkness. It was impossible to see more than a few yards at a time, so after a while she began to call out, at first feebly, fearing others might hear, then louder and louder, as despair began to gain upon her. There was not the faintest response! Only the roar of the wind; only the sough of the rain, joined now by the louder and more battering noises of the waves

as they flung themselves in fury against the rocks, exploring fiercely every corner of the space in front. She could distinguish their white teeth at the edge of the sand, and the long, sinuous, snake-like curves running towards her, like some sort of sea-dragons or slimy primeval monsters, thirsting to devour. Otherwise everything was as dark, or nearly as dark, as in a room of which the shutters are shut. Suddenly, groping about the sand, she stumbled over a rock sticking up in the middle—a peculiarly shaped rock, with two pinnacles like church steeples, divided by a gaping fissure. It seemed unfamiliar, somehow. She could not remember any rock like that in Hurrish's saleen. A terrible thought struck her, and she looked agonisingly round, and up at the cliff over her head. Peering intently into the darkness, she was able to make out the square top of something like a tower defined against the sky, with a lower, heavier mass below. The dreadful truth burst upon her in all its reality. It

was *not* Hurrish's saleen, but another ! In the confusion of her search she must have wandered further than she had known, and made her way down another track, which she remembered to have once descended before, and which led from an old and now uninhabited castle belonging to the Macmorroughs. It was all over then ! She would never be in time to warn him ! Her struggles, her suffering were all for nothing ! The disappointment, the blank despair, coming at the end of all her previous fatigues, struck down upon the feeble remains of her strength like a crowbar. And, with a cry, lost in the roar and shriek of the storm, poor Alley sank upon the ground, utterly incapable of moving another step.

CHAPTER XII.

HURRISH SEES THE DEATH SPER'RT.

MEANWHILE Hurrish had had his hands full. When he first reached the saleen the tide was still going out, and the sea had not even begun to rise, the smooth rollers, deflected by the outjutting horns of the bay, reaching the sand in the most innocent of waves, the long rhythmic sweep racing round and round the little bay, carrying their low white crests in a sort of skating curve along the sand, and rushing in mere playful exuberance over the low weed-covered rocks amongst which it ended.

It seemed folly not to try and get the boat round to Tubbamina, where, whatever storm might come, it would be safe. Accordingly,

Hurrish pulled it down to the brink, pushed it into the water, waded after, sprang in, took to his oars and rowed rapidly out through the narrow horse-shoe-shaped opening.

He had just got beyond the rocks when the storm broke. In an instant he was in the thick of it. The darkness descended like a pillar of cloud; the rain flew at his face, as a cat flies, with all its claws outstretched. The water began to bubble and boil. Multitudes of cross currents—the confused uncertainty of the frightened crowd before it had settled itself in one direction—making the coracle curvet and prance like a skittish horse. Still Hurrish pulled steadily on. To a stranger few boats are more alarming than a coracle. The slightest sea sets it tossing like a bubble. Down it goes into the very depths of the hollows, rocking the next like a cork upon the very brim of the ridges; sea-sickness itself, if you are addicted to so lamentable an infirmity, gives way to sheer panic. Once accustomed to its ways, however, this very buoyancy gives con-

fidence. It will ride like a duck over a sea that would swamp a more pretentious craft as readily as it would a stable bucket. Hur-rish, of course, had absolute confidence in his own boat, and as far as the danger of a capsize went, would have taken it out in any gale.

So far, however, the storm had only been preluding, and had plenty of arrows still in reserve. That sudden change to the north-west, which had driven Alley from her refuge under the ledge of rocks, caught Hur-rish in mid-sea, and in the very teeth. If he had had a sail he would infallibly have been capsized. Even as it was, the coracle seemed for a moment to buzz like a top, then, like a checked top, to come to a complete standstill. He set his strength to the oar, and toiled at it like a galley-slave, the bull-voiced monster roaring threats the while into his ears, and buffeting him actively over the head. It was a regular hand-to-hand duel. Whenever he gained a few yards, fresh succour seemed to come pouring in to his adversaries, and bearing

down upon him. He was one, and they were a host, with other hosts, too, behind that host. Still it seemed to himself that he was gaining; Tubbamina was certainly nearer than it had been ten minutes before. Suddenly, as ill luck—worse luck even than he knew of—would have it, there came a defection upon his own side. Above the roar and the hurly-burly he heard, or rather felt, another sound, a small one, but worse than all the rest put together. The oars were old, and, though carefully spliced and mended, were not equal to being the point of resistance between two such combatants. There was a faint crack, and looking down, he saw that one of them had given way at the splicing, a little above where it rested upon the rowlocks. With breathing-time he could have made it good, but in the teeth of such a gale it was obviously impossible.

Reluctantly he was obliged to let the coracle go about, a victory which the wind celebrated with a fresh roar, catching it broadside-on, and sending a bucket or two

of water to the bottom. It seemed hardly a minute before they were back again at the mouth of the saleen, but the entrance was a tougher job. One of the safest of boats in the open sea, a coracle is one of the riskiest nearing rocks, a touch which would do another no harm sufficing to carry death through its canvas sides. To any one looking on from the shore it would probably have seemed an impossibility to get it in without impaling it upon one or other of the two points, outstretched like crabs' claws to catch it. Here, however, Hurrish's strength told. Shifting the disabled oar to windward, he brought his whole strength to bear upon the other, resisting the onslaught of the wind and sea, which would have driven it on the rocks, and steering straight for the centre of the open. Another minute and he was inside, and in calm water.

The tide was still a long way out, so that there would be a good many hours before the sea would be at the top of the saleen. He resolved accordingly to tie the boat up,

get a few hours' sleep, and be back again at the saleen at early dawn. It was a heavy job getting it emptied and dragged over the sand. With an ordinary boat of the same size it would have been impossible, but a coracle, amongst its other merits, is astonishingly light. Having got it as high as he could, and secured it additionally with a rope round the usual rock, he left it lying there, climbed the pathway, part of which was by this time washed away by the deluge, and set his face joyfully for home.

His night's adventures were not, however, ended! Half-way between the shore and the house, happening to glance a little to the left, he perceived, to his unspeakable dismay, a white object moving slowly along a little ahead of him, but apparently in the same direction. Sometimes it would stop short, then, after a few minutes' pause, move slowly on again as before. It was not a sheep, for it was too high from the ground. It was not a man, for it was too white, and, what was more appalling still,

the upper portion of the figure alone was visible, the rest being either lost to sight amongst the rocks, or, more probably, non-existent. Hurrish, as we know, was saturated to the very bone and to the very marrow of his bones with superstition, and that the object before him was anything but a Ban-shee, Clurigan, or “sper’rt” of some sort, did not occur to him for a moment. The perspiration broke out in great beads upon his face, and he stopped short, shaking from head to foot, his knees knocking against one another, his strength, which a few minutes ago had been proof against the worst that the sea and the storm could do, utterly failing against this new ordeal.

But that it was uttering no sound, he would have felt absolutely certain that it was the “Death sper’rt,” commonly seen, he knew, by people about to die. His own great-uncle had seen one—so his mother had often told him—walking along, sobbing, and tearing its hair, and he, as every one knew, had been hanged for shooting a

Galway gentleman within the year. Hur-rish was not more afraid of dying than another man, but the bare idea of receiving a "warnin'" made the flesh creep upon his bones, and his hair stand on end with horror. He would rather any day have faced a thousand substantial dangers than one such bodiless one. Meanwhile, the white figure was slowly preceding him, moving apparently directly towards the cabin, from which a candle, placed in one of the windows, was throwing a ghostly tremulous gleam over the rocks. Had it been going in any other direction, Hurrish would have fled ignominiously, but going in this direction there was nowhere else unfortunately for him to fly to. Alarm for the others began, too, to prevail; so after a minute he slowly followed, shaking like a leaf, his teeth chattering in his head, ready at any moment to turn and flee should the sper'rt show any disposition to approach him.

Suddenly it wavered, fell forward, and

the next minute, to his increasing horror, it began to cry and moan, sobbing convulsively to itself—curiously human-like sobs they were—and writhing about on the ground like a creature in pain. There could be no further doubt *now*. It was the “Death sper’t.” He was a doomed man. God help Alley, and his mother, and the pore little childer! what ’ud they do without him, ’t all, ’t all? he wondered dismally.

He remained aloof, his eyes starting out of his head, his blood seeming to turn to water in his veins, so terrified was he. Terror itself, however, at last lent him a sort of courage—the courage to escape, and he began cautiously making the circuit of the thing sitting there, sobbing and moaning upon the ground. If he could only once get to the other side he could make a rush for the house, and bolt and bar the door against it. Then, at least, he would no longer see it, and that would be always something. He had nearly executed this ingenious manœuvre, when all at once the sper’t seemed to perceive

him, for it stretched its arms towards him, uttering, as it did so, a wild appealing cry.

It was all that was wanting to complete his agony! Too terrified now to fly, too terrified to move, he remained glued to the ground, shaking from head to foot, while the figure, finding apparently that he did not stir, began to move slowly towards him, half sobbing, and holding its hands out piteously the while.

With a hoarse cry he flung himself upon his knees before it.

"For the luv ov God! for the sake of the holy blissed Vargin, keep back wid ye!" he stammered, his tongue cleaving to his mouth from sheer terror. "God 'tween us an' harm, what are you 't all?"

"Hurrish! Hurrish!"

"Me God, it knows me name! For the tindher marcy of heaven keep away wid you! Don't spake to me! Be near us an' purtect us all good this night!"

"Hurrish! Hurrish! why don't you come Hurrish, it's Alley! Don't you know Alley?"

"Alley!" He did not venture even now to approach; and it was not until she had called to him twice again that his terror began to some degree to give way to conviction.

"The Lord ov grace! Y'aint goin' for to till me 'tis you, Alley Sheehan, out in the black dead o' night?" he said, with a sort of slow incredulity.

"Yis, Hurrish, 'tis me. Won't ye come to me? I've hurted me foot, and can't shtir."

She was white enough, poor little Alley, for any ghost! white, and torn, and wet, and wearied to death. Trembling and hardly able yet to shake off his terrors, Hurrish approached; and it was not until he was able in the dim light to perceive her face close to his own, that he began at last to believe in the reality of her presence.

"Mother ov marcies, so 'tis you, Alley darlint, sure an' sartin!" he exclaimed at last. "Divil sweep me for a gomeral if I didn't take ye for a sper'rt. Will I carry ye home? Sure, I see y' haven't the fut undher ye 't all!"

He lifted her up, without waiting for an answer, and began carrying her hurriedly towards the light. Suddenly, as the reality of her existence pressed more and more fully upon him, he burst into a loud laugh, which rang noisily out into the darkness.

“Be the piper that played before Moses, 'tis the born fule I am, sure and sartin!” he exclaimed. “Jewel macree, but you guv me the nice fright intoirely this night! May I never ate bread, if I didn't think 'twas the Death sper'rt cum to tell me me grave was dug! Wait till the boys larn Hurrish O'Brien was frighted down on to his two bended knees by little Alley Sheehan. Begorra I'll never hear the ind of it till I die, so I won't!” and he laughed again and again boisterously.

Alley did not echo the laugh. She was too worn out even to speak. She let herself be carried passively along, thankful to feel herself at last safe and on the way home. As they approached the cabin, however, and the light began to stream more strongly upon

them, she began to bethink her of the necessity of telling him what she had seen while they were still alone.

“Hurrish, I’ve a word to say to ye,” she said. “’Twas to luk for you I went out this night, only I missed the way and got into the wrong saleen ; an’ indade, an’ indade I thought I’d niver git home agin, but have to lie there till mornin’.” She paused a moment to recover breath. “Hurrish, I seen Maurice Brady,” she said, solemnly.

Hurrish, however, did not seem to see anything alarming in the information.

“Did ye so, Alley ? Thin I haven’t hard sound or token ov him this long while back. I thought ’twas maybe to ’Merikee he’d gone,” he said, placidly.

“No, he was there. An’—an’, Hurrish,—’tind to me, Hurrish,—he had a gun wid him !”

Still Hurrish declined to be alarmed.

“’Tis the fule he is to carry one, thin,” he said. “The polis ’ll be takin’ it from him, sure as eggs is mate, and what good

will it be to him thin? Only a waste ov good money."

Alley began to lose patience. She was utterly worn out, and this difficulty of making herself understood seemed a sort of climax to her troubles.

"Sure, Hurrish, ye don't ondershtand me 't all, 't all," she said, fretfully. "Don't I tell you 'twas for to warn *yersel'* I went down to the saleen. 'Tis *you* he's carryin' it for, an' no one ilse. God forgiv' him! Tis *yersel'* he's manin' for to shoot."

"Is't shoot me? Och now, Alley dear, 'tis dramin' ye are, sure and sartin. What the mortal man would he be wantin' to shoot me for?" he replied, in tones of genuine astonishment.

"He does mane it, thin. He tould me so hisself."

"Told ye hisself! Gorra! if that don't bate Banagher! Where did he go for to tell ye sich a thing?"

"Down at th' ould abbey."

"Is it to-night?"

"No, not to-night; 'fore iver the trial cum on. He bade me tell you he'd do it."

"Ye niver did, thin."

"I know. I'd ought, but somehow I—*durstn't.*"

Hurrish scratched his head. They had now reached the cabin, and he had set Alley down, so that he had his hand free for that essential part of the operation of thinking. The conclusion he arrived at was that she was too "bothered" and "flustered" to-night to be able to know clearly what she meant. Very likely she had "dramed" the whole thing; that, at any rate, seemed the readiest explanation. Having just recovered from one terror, he was not in the least disposed to entertain another one. He addressed himself accordingly to the task of soothing her.

"Well now, Alley dear, sure you'll tell me all 'bout it in the mornin'," he said, coaxingly. "Don't ye say no more 'bout guns nor nothink to-night, only into yer bed wid ye, where ye had ought to ha' been hours ago. Drink the

laste sup of whisky, an' get straight in, an' cover yourself up warm wid anything ye've got. Take me big coat—'tis dry, for I left it 't home. Be aff this instant minute, an' God bless you, an' ye'll tell me all about the gun and the rist of it in the mornin'."

These various directions were of necessity whispered, for old Bridget had fallen asleep, and lay snoring in her own corner, and it was a point of considerable importance to both of them not to awaken her. Alley was too exhausted to make any further struggle. Weariness had reached a point where a sort of collapse seemed to set in. She declined the whisky, but went into her own room passively without another word. Her last thought, as she wearily pulled off her wet clothes and prepared to lie down beside little warm unconscious Katty, was that Hurrish was safe to-night, and the door shut and bolted. Nothing, thank God, could possibly happen to him between this and to-morrow morning!

CHAPTER XIII.

UPON THE VERY BRINK.

SHE was still sleeping the heavy sleep of utter weariness when Hurrish got up and looked out of the little window of the outside room, which faced east. It was dark night still in the cabin. The cocks and hens slept profoundly on their perches. Old Bridget's snores made a deep bass accompaniment to the lighter music proceeding from the noses of the two small boys cuddled snugly in their own private corner. Away to the east, however, a faint greenish light was rising. The wind had lowered, but still beat in angry puffs against the house, shaking it irritably, as if to ascertain whether its strength was really impaired or not, then racing off with a

scampering noise as of a frightened crowd across the rocks. Having pulled on his clothes—unpleasantly wet still from the night before—Hurrish carefully opened the door, glancing back as he did so for fear of disturbing the others. Lep, who had been watching these proceedings with keen eyes, sprang up at this juncture, and ran to him, curling himself into a comma, and entreating with all a dog's irresistible eloquence to be allowed to go too. Hurrish hesitated, then, remembering that if the sea allowed of it, he should have to take out the boat, he ordered him in a whisper to go back and lie down again.

The dog obeyed, but unwillingly, giving a low whimper of dissatisfaction, which followed his master piteously as he left the cabin. As soon as he had got outside, the rain flew at his face with recovered spite. The whole scene, as far as he could see it, was swathed in fog which seemed to envelop the darkness, which in turn swathed its edges and hid its extent. Hurrish looked up at

what ought by this time to have been the sky with a grimace of disgust ; then, first sitting down for a moment on the low wall to pull on his boots, which he held in his hands, he set out at a quick pace for the saleen.

The coracle was still safe, but the sea had risen enormously during the night, and was beating through the narrow entrance in huge, green curls, which shot their spray high into the air through the fog. Half an hour more, and they would be sweeping against the rocks at the end.

To attempt to row out through such a sea would have been simple insanity. Upon the other hand, to bring the coracle further in than it was was impossible, for at this point the cliff rose in a succession of perfectly perpendicular steps, the result of the horizontal stratification of the limestone, quarried incessantly away as it was from below by the sea. In the upper part these steps were partially sheeted with loose scale-like fragments, upon which larger stones—fallen from the matrix

above—lay about in loose heaps. The only thing, therefore, to be done was to fix the boat as firmly as possible, so that the waves, when they did reach it, should be unable to dislodge it. Accordingly Hurrish began hastily shovelling in sand with an old shovel which he kept for digging bait in a cleft. The tide, however, was rising fast, so fast that he felt that the time would be too short to complete the operation. As soon, therefore, as there was enough sand to protect the bottom of the boat, he began hastily throwing in pieces of rock, all that he could lay hands on. There were not very many about, the steps rising, as has been said, straight out of the sands; so, having collected all that there were, he mounted the path in order to get at those above.

He was warm now with his work. There was a pleasure, too, in baffling the enemy, and, between the two sensations, his broad genial face shone with a glow which ought to have gone some way towards dispersing the fog.

He had been up twice, and the second time he fancied that he heard a movement in the fog above his head, something that sounded like the stealthy approach of footsteps. Surprised by such a sound, at such an hour, he shouted to know who was there. There was no answer, however. The silence was complete, tomb-like. Concluding, therefore, that he was mistaken, he hurried to pick up a big block which lay at his feet, and turned to descend. He was in the act of doing so, when again, and this time unmistakably, he heard the sound, and turning, quick as thought, looked up into the misty vault. For an instant—only for an instant—there was the outline of a head; the outline of a gun; then a flash, and the next moment a stinging, numbing, indescribable pain right through the middle of his chest caused him to drop the stone which he had in his hands, and with a wild cry, in which pain, indignation, and bitter unspeakable astonishment all seemed to mingle, he dropped down upon the ledge where he was standing, while a

sound of footsteps, first nearer, then further, further, further, sounded overhead, finally dying away in the far-off solitary distance. The murderer had effected his escape.

And Hurrish! For a while he lay there like one stunned; knowing what had happened to him, and yet refusing to know it; fighting fiercely against the consciousness. He was dreaming! he was perhaps drunk! the fairies had bewitched him! Anything and everything seemed possible—nay, probable—save what had actually happened. That alone was the utterly and the absolutely *impossible*!

And yet through it all he knew—knew as a matter of absolute certainty—that he had “got his death.” It was all over. He was as much done for as though he already lay in Tubbamina churchyard, under the sod which was always so full of camomile flowers. That good stanch frame of his, which, under ordinary circumstances, might have defied the slow decays of another fifty years, that number of hours would probably

suffice for it now. The sea underneath was hardly nearer to him than that other and larger sea upon whose waters we must all one day float. Oddly enough, the idea passed through his own mind though in another form, and he turned his head slightly so as to look in the direction where the O'Brasil lay. The action brought on a sudden rush of blood, accompanied by a pain, the agony of which seemed to tear through every nerve, sinew, and artery in his body, finally settling in a dull concentrated ache in the centre of his breast. He groaned aloud, writhing in anguish on his narrow perch, and tearing aside coat and shirt, looked down at the small round hole through the dark lips of which the blood was ebbing fast and furiously. It *was* true then ! It was *no* dream. He was hit—hit to death !

At first the look was one of mere animal agony, the joint heritage of all of us poor vertebrated brutes. After a while, however, another expression came into it ; a sort of mute agonised wonder ; a piteous appeal to the

rulers of the mysterious, the unexplainable. It was hardly anger, for he was too puzzled, too benumbed, moreover, by fast growing weakness for that. It was rather a deep abounding sense of the mysteriousness of the thing. To believe yourself in a natural world, to find yourself in an unnatural one, to take up a fruit and to find a stone, to stretch out a hand to a friend and to receive back a dagger in your heart, faintly describes the sort of vortex of mystery into which his soul was plunged, and in which his brain seemed to swim with perplexity no less than with pain. It was so overwhelming that it seemed to do away with all thoughts of vengeance—almost with the last ineradicable clinging to life. With the sort of desperation which comes to a man sometimes in the worst crises of his fate, he simply lay down again upon his perch, and rested his head against the rock. If help came, it came; if not, it didn't! Help himself he couldn't. The slightest movement only precipitated the end. God was

good, and might help him yet. So he reasoned, in fatalism quite as much as in piety.

As he lay there his brain was visited with odd fancies. Weakness painted certain things with a curious vividness. His fancy wandered away to the cabin, and to little Katty—his own black-eyed little Katty—curled up at that moment like a small tortoise-shell kitten in her basket, little guessing what was happening to her poor old daddy ! He thought of Alley too, but less vividly. He could not direct his thoughts, but was at the mercy of what came uppermost. Everything swam and melted, and ran confusedly one into another. He fancied by moments that he was lying, not on the rocks at all, but in a little hollow scooped out of the sands a few miles further down the coast. It was dedicated to unbaptised babies whom the Church refuses to let lie in consecrated soil, but whose memory the pious feeling of the country cherishes with a peculiar tenderness. In this graveyard there was one grave, as it happened, which was not the

grave of an infant. It was the grave of an unknown man, who had been washed ashore close to the spot, and been allowed to find an asylum in it. Hurrish had often stopped as he was passing to look at the grave and its nameless headstone. To wonder, with a passing wonder, who the unknown man had been, and whether any one had been left to mourn his loss. Now, with the incoherency of weakness, he felt as if he himself were that unknown man, tossed there alone, without a friend or a pitying eye to see him die.

Hark! something was stirring! There were steps over his head. An odd shuffling noise. Was it a man or only an animal—a sheep perhaps strayed too near the bank? With a last resource of strength he lifted his head and shouted. Such a poor shout! the very ghost and wraith of his former ones. Then waited. There was no answer; shouted again, and still no answer. Then feebly, doubtingly, half-hesitatingly he uttered a word—only one word—“Morry!” This time

there *was* an answer, and over the edge immediately above him a face gazed down, the frightened face and wild vacant eyes—not of Maurice Brady, but of Thady-na-Taggart !

Hurrish saw it and beckoned. It was his last conscious act. Slight as was the movement, it was followed by a fresh and more violent rush of blood from the wound in his breast, and he fell back upon the rock fainting, unconscious.

When he came to himself he was again alone, but the bleeding had temporarily ceased. Something had been done. He could feel that a bandage or piece of rag of some sort had been applied. He called twice feebly, but there was no answer. The daylight was everywhere now. A new day had come ; a new life ! The clouds were still thick overhead, but the fog had all but wasted away. In every direction the daylight was shining upon grey rocks, and upon a wild and storm-troubled world of waters. Everywhere over the wide face of the sea the wind was speeding home ships that longed for the

sight of land. All along the whole edge of the Atlantic waves were rushing up with thunder on to shores, sandy or rocky as the case might be. Away, everywhere over the face of the country, under roofs large and small, high pitched and low pitched, people were sleeping, or waking to think of another day. Children were laughing in their beds; women beginning to bustle about; strong men rejoicing in their strength; and upon one bare ledge under the pitiless sky a strong man was fast growing weaker than an infant as the blood flowed from his veins to bedew the indifferent rocks. Was no one coming, then? *no one? no one?* he wondered. Must he lie there till he died? What had become of Thady? of Alley? of every one? Did none of them know or care that he was dying there—alone?

He was consumed now with thirst, that awful thirst which adds the last horror to battle-fields. His tongue seemed to cleave to his mouth, and to be dry and hard as a piece of wood. The vast watery immensity

beneath mocked him with its multitudinous rippling waves. He saw his own coracle below him, and the sight cut to the quick with a sudden start of pain. The first feeling of stupefaction, almost of resignation, had quite passed away now. The horrible restlessness of exhaustion was upon him, and he writhed in torment upon his narrow perch. His eyes, travelling in mute despair over the immense arch in front, rested upon the gulls as they dipped and soared—very perfection of ideal freedom—with a dull misery which almost amounted to hate. What had he ever done? what had his sin been, he asked himself bitterly, that he should have been allowed to be shot like a dog, and then left to die a dog's death? It was only a minute since he was in his own little cabin, waking, safe and strong and happy. A minute? nay, but a year. Had he, in fact, ever been so? Was it not a dream and a delusion that he had ever been that man, who was safe and strong and happy? Had he not rather been lying here always—a miserable

creature, a worm, with a man's capacity for suffering? A creature so ludicrously weak that he could barely clutch at the tuft of daisies springing at his side—a pitiful thing, writhing and wriggling and making a moan, but so feeble that it did not disturb the very gulls over his head—flung out like a barrow-load of rubbish upon a ledge to die.

Poor Hurrish! he was a martyr, too, after a fashion, though he knew it not. A martyr to a not very glorious cause, one that was certainly not very much worth dying for. A martyr to a long and an ugly past—a past in which he, not having been born, had at least no share of the blame. He was dying because Hate of the Law is the birthright and the dearest possession of every native son of Ireland. He was dying because, for many a weary year, that country had been as ill-governed a morsel of earth as was to be found under the wide-seeing eye of God. The old long-repenting sin of the stronger country was the culprit, as surely as if it had pointed the gun at his

breast. Is that ridiculous? Perhaps so, and yet it is true too, as many ridiculous things *are* true.

Another, and perhaps an equally ridiculous, fact was, that it was only now that indignation against his assailant was really beginning to find place in his breast. Not even now, for shooting him—that, though inexplicable, was comparatively venial—but for deserting him—leaving him there on that naked ledge to die alone. If he would come back even *now*, be with him, stay beside him, let him have the comfort of seeing his face, any human face, and not only this big, dreadful, empty immensity, he felt that he could freely forgive him all the rest.

How long had he lain there? Sometimes he fancied that he had fallen over the ledge, and was tossing about in the waves below, up and down, to and fro. The sun shone upon the waves, but it did not seem to warm him. He was a cork, he was a bubble, he was a coracle. The fancies followed one

another so fast that there was no time to recognise them before they were gone again. At last he was aroused by something that was not a fancy—something soft, yet rough, moving backwards and forwards wetly over his face. He opened his eyes, and opened them into a mass of tangled fur. It was Lep—poor, honest, faithful Lep—whining and looking piteously at his master, and evidently perfectly aware of his cruel plight. Thady was there too, his white face red with running, the perspiration pouring from it in great drops. They were not alone; others were following. Two men, fishermen from Tubbamina, who came up with frightened faces and loud ejaculations of dismay. There was no time for ejaculations, however, no time either to tell even how Thady had made them understand. The first thing was to get Hurrish home, and for this it would be necessary, they decided, to get more help and a door.

There was another inevitable delay. The nearest cabin was his own, so that it was

there they went. How the news had been told there was no one to tell, but in a shorter time than would have seemed possible there came a flying sound of footsteps nearer and nearer. A pause; a low cry of anguish, as of a soul taking flight, and Alley Sheehan was upon her knees beside him, her white despairing face close to his; her great grey eyes strained and dry, with the tension of an agony too great for tears or words. Close behind her, like shadow upon light, followed old Bridget, mad with fury and athirst for revenge. Seizing the girl, she thrust her aside with a curse, telling her to keep back, and not be allays meddlin'; then flung herself almost upon her son, at the imminent risk of pushing him off his precarious resting-place.

Mechanically Alley obeyed and drew back. Is there any passion, I wonder, any human need so great that it will not give way to habit, if only that habit has been continuous enough, more especially if it has its root in fear? Hurrish had caught sight of

her face, however, its look of desperate misery striking him through all his languor, and he beckoned to her to come back, Bridget sullenly making way for her to do so.

“Don’t ye take on so, allanah,” he whispered, soothingly. “Sure ’twas to be, or it wudn’t ha’ been. Anyhow, ye did all ye cud, an’ no one on this mortal arth cud do more.”

She made no answer. She was turned to stone. The worst had come, and what did anything else matter? Let Maurice Brady come and kill her too. She would only thank him, she felt.

The men had now come back with the door, and were about to lift Hurrish on to it. Just before they did so, however, a new idea seemed to strike him, for he beckoned her over to him again.

“You see ’twas the Death sper’rt, Alley, I seen after all!” he said, a faint gleam of humour struggling for a moment across the paleness of his face.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME PRECURSORS OF THE MILLENNIUM.

THE effect upon Tubbamina of the news of Hurrish's disaster was of the nature of a galvanic shock ! an electric current of horror, grief, dismay, fury, which seemed to rush through all its inhabitants alike. There was not a man, woman, or child who did not feel as if a personal injury had been done them ; a valuable piece of property removed ; a serious breach made in his or her future comfort. Who first put the general instinct into words it would be difficult to say, but within a very short time of the arrival of the news, every one, as if by inspiration, had struck upon the same name as that of the culprit. There was no question either about

concealing *this* murder, or protecting its perpetrator. On the contrary, every one was athirst for vengeance, and eager to bring the offender to justice.

That distinguished upholder of the law, Mr Andy Holohun—prominent member of the Republican brotherhood, and reputed assistant at at least half-a-dozen violent outrages—was the first to suggest calling in the aid of the “polis.” No sooner said than done. Three or four men—Mr Holohun himself at their head—ran off straight to the barracks, and laid the case before the sergeant in command; then turned back to concoct further plans. A party of men started off to Ballyvaughan, to intercept him if he attempted to cross in the steamer to Galway. Another ran up the Gortnacoppin ridge to see if by chance he might be lurking in the cabin there. All the powers of that underground government which, as most people are aware, is not without power in Ireland, were brought to bear upon the matter. The very women felt it to be ab-

olutely incumbent upon them, as good citizens, to suspend all household operations, in order to sit together on the doorsteps and volubly curse the culprit! Never had so spontaneous an abhorrence of crime, never so magnificent a thirst after abstract justice, been exhibited before by an Irish village!

While this excitement was going on at Tubamina a different scene was proceeding at the cabin, to which Hurrish had meantime been carefully conveyed, and laid there upon his own bed. Poor Mary O'Brien's bed! the one she had brought there with such pride, and purchased with her own hard-earned money. She had died on it, and now Hurrish's turn had come. Is there any stranger symbol more significant of all the mingled woof and warp, good and evil, joy, sorrow, hope, agony, of our perplexing life, than that same homely and indispensable piece of furniture?

In spite of the superior interest of the search, which had retained a good many of the neighbours, there were not wanting

scores of excited and vehemently sympathetic visitors to the cabin. The women arrived sobbing, and continued to wail and cry aloud all the time they remained, standing in a crowd around the bed, and suggesting every variety of contradictory remedy. Happily they were at last dispersed by the dispensary doctor, who insisted that the patient should be left in peace, announcing, at the same time, with bluff outspokenness, that the case was, in his opinion, a hopeless one from the beginning. The bullet was not able to be extracted, though he put poor Hurrish to considerable pain in his efforts to reach it. He was not a particularly skilful practitioner, though an excellent man and an admirable judge of pigs,—a talent which naturally caused him to be much respected in the vicinity.

After he had left, a few of the sympathisers, whom he had expelled, stole back under different pleas, and amongst these Sal Connor. The poor girl's grief was most genuine, though the manner she took of

showing it might have been less exuberant with advantage. The instant she came into the cabin she threw herself flat down upon the floor, throwing her overskirt over her head, flinging her two hands into the air, rocking herself vigorously to and fro, and uttering shriek after shriek, half stifled, it is true, by the stoutness of the material, but still sufficiently piercing to be decidedly painful to any sensitive tympanum.

Hurrish, disturbed by the clamour, lifted his head from the pillow, and looked with a sort of mute appeal at Alley, who thereupon stooped down, and put her arm round the girl's neck.

"Sal, darlint, you wudn't be breakin' his heart, wud ye?" she said, coaxingly. "Sure the doctor left strict ward he wasn't on no 'count to be distarbed. Prayin' is all we can do. Cum outside wid me, an' I'll tell ye all the doctor said."

Sal Connor allowed herself, rather sullenly, to be half lifted up and led outside the cabin. Once there, however, she again broke out

into fresh and more piercing screams of distress, not unmingled now with displeasure at her ejection.

“ ’Tis all very foine for you, Alley Sheehan ! Half a nun as y’ar, an’ carin’ for no man yit, as ivery wan knows, no more nor the birds in th’ air ! But I tell ye I *lov’d* him, I *lov’d* him ! Oh, my God ! my God ! Ochone ! ochone ! ochone ! to think of him lyin’ there, murdered and kilt before me eyes, lukin’ so white, an’ spakin’ so wake ! What ’ul I do, at all, at all ? ’Tis broke me heart is, to think ov it ! The toimes an’ toimes I moight ha’ married, an’ niver wud luk at one of thim wid thinkin’ ov Hurrish O’Brien ! There’s Mr Moriatty—him as keeps th’ ‘Shamrock of Irin’—if he’s axed me wance, he’s axed me foive times, an’ wudn’t be sich a born loir hisself as to go denoyin’ ov it ! Ochone ! ochone ! ochone ! Oh my God, what ’ul I do, ’t all ? Sure me heart’s broke in two ! me heart’s broke in two ! ”

Alley could only reiterate her soothing words, which, after a while, appeared to suc-

ceed, for Sal's wrath turned to expostulation.

“Arrah let me back, an’ I’ll be shtill as a mouse, and niver say the word, only sit and watch him brathin’! Och Alley Sheehan, Alley Sheehan, if ye’d the list taste of a woman’s heart in yer brist this blissed day, an’ knew what lovin’ a man was loike, sure ye wouldn’t go for to deny me!”

To this compromise the other consented, and they went back to the cabin together. Poor Sal, however, had apparently overestimated her own powers of composure. She sat down quietly enough for about ten minutes, after which she began to sob and then to howl; finally, with a terrific explosion, half stifled subterraneously in her petticoats, she got up and ran out of the house, her cries growing fainter and fainter until they died away in the distance.

After this the cabin really lapsed into something like tranquillity. Hurrish seemed to have sunk into a doze, for he lay with his eyes closed, and his lips parted. Old

Bridget's furious lamentations and denunciations had by this time died away, and she appeared to have sunk into a sort of coma. Seated on her stool by the fire, the big iron ladle in her hand, she seemed to be muttering spells into the pot, rather than occupying herself with cooking. All the nursing and carrying out of the doctor's directions fell exclusively to Alley's share, whom Bridget now no longer interfered with, looking on with a sort of sullen indifference, as much as to say that since all hope was at an end, it did not much matter what happened, or *who* looked after him!

The children, much against their will, had been taken away by a neighbour, but had been promised by Alley to be allowed to return later. The only other person left was poor Thady-na-Taggart, whom it would have been impossible indeed to remove short of main force, so determined had he shown himself to stay. No one could accuse him, however, of making a noise! He sat on the floor, crouched close to the wall, like a sick dog,

his eyes fixed immovably upon the bed. The poor fellow looked years older than he had done the day before. His innocent, witless face had a more serious and responsible expression than usual, and his cheeks were crumpled into a number of fine wrinkles, like a badly-folded piece of linen. Lep, equally immovable, and in almost identically the same attitude, lay beside him.

Hark ! A distant noise ; sounding strange and incongruous in the melancholy stillness of the little interior. A monotonous “tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp,” approaching over the flat rocks. Another sound, too, a dull, continuous roar,—not at all, however, like the roar of the sea,—growing louder ; broken with whoops, with cries as of derision, with shouts and shrieks of rage and satisfaction. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp ! on they came, a body of men stepping together, evidently with the steady uniformity of men drilled to walk in step. Behind,—like dead leaves at the heels of a storm,—a shuffling, scuffling noise of feet. The cries, whoops,

groans grew nearer and nearer, though also less distinct as if intentionally muffled. Now and then, however, an irrepressible groan filled the air, followed by a prolonged hissing noise as of a crowd of geese driven along a road.

Bridget looked up from her pot with an angry, half-idiotic stare; Hurrish, too, seemed to catch the sound, for he turned his head so as to face the half-opened door. Nearer and nearer came the steps—now close at hand. A muttering, buzzing, excited sound upon the rocks outside; a rush forward; then a sudden lull, like waves driven backwards—a sound of many voices whispering eagerly together. Then the door, already ajar, was pushed wide open, and four policemen entered, two by two, and in their midst, with handcuffs on his wrists—hatless, bespattered from head to foot with the mud and filth that had been liberally flung at him ever since his capture; his lip cut and bleeding, from a stone that had accompanied the softer, if more opprobrious,

missiles ; his clothes torn, and hanging about him in ribbons,—came Maurice Brady.

Every one was still as death for an instant. Then, as if the sight had broken violently through her lethargy, old Bridget sprang forward, iron ladle in hand.

With one swing of her sinewy old arms, she had pushed the policemen aside, and was standing face to face with the prisoner. The next she had clutched him by the front of his coat, and was shaking him to and fro, as a tigress shakes a man before proceeding to devour him.

“Giv him t’ me ! Giv him t’ me ! Giv him t’ me !” she screamed. “Giv me up the massacreen miscray-int, till I tear him in pieces ’fore yis all ! ’Tis goin’ the way ov yer bruder y’ar, ye scum ! Yis, y’ar, ye black-haarted bliggard ! The blast of Heaven be an ye, and Hell’s bells ’tind yer berryin’, ye murderin’ sweep of th’ arth ! Luk at him ! Luk at him that’s lyin’ on that bed ! —him that was betterer nor a father to ye ! yis, an’ a mother too, ye onnatural naggur !

Hangin's too good for ye ; an' if I had ye 'lone, ruin to me sowl, but I'd tear yer flesh to gr-ass wid me two ould hands, an' shmash yer skull agin the vargin arth—so I wud, ye murderin' thief ov the warld !”

It was not without some difficulty, and by the exercise of a considerable amount of physical force, that the constables in charge succeeded in rescuing their prisoner from the hands of his exasperated assailant, who assuredly would have carried out her threats had she been free to do so ; and, handcuffed as he was, Maurice Brady was of course absolutely powerless to defend himself. To his credit be it said, he retained as much composure as a man under so remarkably uncomfortable an ordeal well could. A dull flush passed over his face, and his eyes gleamed angrily ; nevertheless he faced his furious old assailant with a smile of tolerably successful indifference.

Suddenly all started, and turned towards the bed. Hurrish's voice was heard speaking. At first it had been lost in the tumult ; no

sooner, however, was it perceived than a deathlike silence succeeded to the clamour of tongues. Old Bridget relaxed her hold on the prisoner; her shrieks sank, and she turned eagerly towards her son. It was not to her, however, but to the constable in charge, that Hurrish was speaking.

“What’s the gentleman bin doin’ ’t all, sargint?” he inquired, in a tone of mild curiosity.

The constable—a big stupid-looking man, with a large moustache, and a pair of goggling, greenish eyes—stared blankly.

“Isn’t *he* the man that done for you? Sure I arristed him as such,” he said, with a spasm of official rage, half stifled by his official collar.

“Is it Mr Brady?” Hurrish smiled pityingly. “Arrah, sargint, I wonders at you,—I do indade! Whoiver put sich a fule’s notion into yer head? ’Tis a thrick they’ve bin played on ye, whoiver dun it!”

The sergeant’s face was an edifying study! He stared first at Hurrish, lying upon the

bed, his white face all the whiter for its dark tangled beard and hair; then at old Bridget; then at the prisoner, as if in hopes of extracting the truth from him. The latter's face, it must be owned, did not particularly bear out the other's assertion. His lips twitched, and his hands, with all his efforts to control them, shook visibly under the handcuffs.

"An' who dun it 't all?" burst simultaneously, not from one, but a dozen pairs of lips,—the crowd, which at first had considerably staid outside, having at this juncture pushed in, man after man, till the cabin was nearly filled.

Hurrish put his hand up to his head as if to assist his memory.

"'Twas some parties in a boat, I'm thinkin', but I can't call to moind essactly," he said, feebly. "I was cumin' alang the thrack, an' I turned t'wards th' say, an' all 'tone't I got the crack in me brist, an' that's all I know, but I seen a little boat soon afther cumin' round foreninst the Glassen rock—a wheesy little dotteen of a thing, nigh well

as shmall as me fist, so 'twos," he added, thoughtfully.

There was a general silence. Not a single being in the cabin, of course, believed a word that he had been listening to. Not one either but felt a pang of dismay and disgust at the thought that the murderer would, after all, escape. So deeply engrained, however, in Ireland, is the instinct under no circumstances to betray a criminal, that the very men who had dragged Maurice triumphantly out of his hiding-place, and had accompanied him thus far, with the amiable intention of hearing that he was safe to be hanged, felt that Hurrish's conduct was only natural, and moreover, that, under similar circumstances, they would have done precisely the same themselves.

Oddly enough, the person who felt least inclined to let the matter rest where it was, was gentle, tender-hearted Alley. A flush of anger rose to her cheek, and she stepped impetuously forward, and opened her mouth as if to speak. Then suddenly

changing her mind, she turned away, and sat silently down in a corner. Happily for Maurice Brady, it had never occurred to anybody to dream of her as a possible witness.

A sort of sudden gloom, a dull feeling of disappointment, fell upon the entire party, as upon an audience that has been promised some exciting drama which fails at the last minute to come off. The men, one by one, began to file out, leaving only the policemen and prisoner in the cabin. Even Bridget fell back, and sat down, with her former air of lethargy, beside the fire. Hurrish was the first to speak.

“I’d loike, if it’s not displazing to yis, to have a word or two wid Mr Brady,” he said, looking round, first at the policemen, then at his mother and Alley. “If ye’ll lave us to our two selves for a while, I’d be ’bliged.”

Sullenly, like one under an irresistible spell, old Bridget went out. Alley followed, avoiding looking at Maurice as she passed him. The policemen, too, moved away, the

sergeant stopping as he did so to unlock the prisoner's handcuffs. They did not intend letting him out of reach entirely, in case of any fresh evidence turning up ; but to keep him in custody, and to take him before a magistrate without more evidence than they had at present, was obviously impracticable.

The men who had accompanied them from Tubbamina were still outside, standing about together in groups, and gloomily exchanging suggestions and condolences. It was a moment of universal brotherhood,—wolves and sheep-dogs meeting and conversing on a sort of common ground. As far as the good wishes of the company present went, there were enough and to spare, every man being perfectly ready to swear a solemn oath that Maurice Brady, and no one else, was the criminal. But, alas ! none of them had seen, or could even pretend they had seen, the deed done. Of what use, therefore, all their zeal or all their excellent intentions, when the victim and only witness absolutely declined to prosecute ? As a proof of good feeling

and unanimity, however, it was certainly edifying in the extreme. Indeed, to see Andy Holohun go up to the big constable, and compare notes with him in a low tone of sympathy and confidential intercourse, was a beautiful sight, calculated to make any one believe in the speedy oncoming of a universal millennium !

CHAPTER XV.

FACE TO FACE.

AND so, and for the last time upon earth, Hurrish O'Brien and Maurice Brady were alone together face to face ! What thoughts passed through their minds, what ineffaceable memories rose up before them both, it is easier to imagine than to put into commonplace words. Their new position towards one another was so new, so appalling, so impossible ; their old one so familiar, so kindly, so, as it were, inevitable,—that to Hurrish, at any rate, it seemed only natural to revert to it, and let the rest be. He waited a while, expecting Maurice to be the first to speak. Then as he did not do so, but remained sullenly aloof, keeping as

near as he could to the door, and apparently resolved not to approach, or if possible look at him, he began himself.

“What I axed ye to shtop an’—spake to me for—Morry, me buoy,” he said, speaking slowly, and evidently with difficulty, “was to tell you ’bout—Mat. I thought I’d be aisier somehow if ye knew how ’t was at the last. I wudn’t loike for to go an’ for you—t’ think—I dun—what ye—thought I—dun.”

Maurice Brady started, and his face changed. A hideous, an altogether intolerable thought, rushed through his brain, as the words fell slowly from the other’s lips,—a thought so dreadful that it seemed to sear him from head to heel like a red-hot iron, and to leave him racked and shaking with agony. His stoicism, his pride, his bitter furious sense of humiliation, all were swept for the moment out of sight, almost out of existence, by this new shock. Did Hurrish mean—was he going to say that it was a *mistake*?—that he had *not* murdered Mat? Was he going to swear *that* to him on his deathbed? A

sudden sickening horror of his own action—a horror which up till now had hardly touched him, even lightly—fell upon him suddenly, consumingly, like a bolt. Little by little he had been pushed on by the thirst for revenge, by the unendurable sting of his own altered position, which he owed, he told himself, exclusively to Hurrish. Like many another before him, he had goaded, deafened, blinded himself into a belief in the necessity of the crime—had told himself that it was not, in fact, a crime at all, but merely the acquitting of a necessary debt;—that honour, revenge, justice—nay, the very peace of his brother's soul—demanded that he should do it, seeing that the law declined to take the matter into its own hands, as it ought to have done. He was not a murderer, therefore, but only an avenger. Suddenly, as at the touch of some dividing and disentangling rod, these arguments fled away,—burst, as a bubble bursts, leaving him there face to face with the real facts. He saw himself as he was—a mur-

derer!—a foul, brutal, cold-blooded murderer. And the murderer of whom? Of his own best friend; of the man who, as old Bridget had truly said, had been a father to him when he needed one; had given him a home when his own was no home to him; had believed in him when nobody else believed; had made his young ambitions *his* ambitions; above all, had loved him as it is given to few men to be loved even by their own fathers. And, in return for all this, what had he, on his part, done? God of justice and of mercy!—he had murdered him!

Though slow, the retribution was complete. If ever the hideousness of a man's crime overtook him in this mortal life, it overtook Maurice Brady at that moment. He had not even—like the vast majority of criminals—that brutal dulness which blunts and deadens the edges of self-consciousness, making remorse less an inward agony than a mere outward dread of consequences. His own hard, revengeful hands

had forged the spear, and now his own quick brains drove it home—home to the very hilt. Like one gone for ever out of this life, out of hope, out of the possibility of repentance, face to face through all eternity with the unending, the ineffaceable, the un-atonable, he writhed in anguish, turning his eyes to the bed and to his victim, as such a lost soul might be expected in its extremity to turn towards its accuser.

“Hurrish!—my God, Hurrish!—speak to me!” he said, in a voice so changed that few would have recognised it. “If you’ve any mercy or pity left, don’t tell me you didn’t kill him! God! if you do, I’ll dash my head against that wall, and die before you yet!”

That this was no idle threat, no mere rhetorical flourish, his bloodshot eyes and changed and haggard face showed plainly. Remorse, flung suddenly like a burning coal into the lake of the soul, produces tortures the agony of which might well drive a much less sensitive man than Maurice Brady to

try the last throw of all with destiny, and exchange the worst he knew for what of worse there might be yet to know.

Hurrish probably saw this, for, quite forgetting his wound, he sprang up in the bed, and stretched his hands out as if to arrest him.

“Morry ! Morry ! Arrah, be aisy, Morry ! I kilt him !—I kilt him !” he exclaimed, vehemently.

“Thank God for that, anyhow !”

The reaction, the relief, fairly overcame him, and, with a groan, Maurice Brady sank suddenly down on his knees, and hid his face in his hands, at the very feet of his brother’s murderer.

For some minutes they remained thus, and there was silence between them. Hurrish lay back and pressed his hand to his chest, looking down at the figure beside him. Was Maurice praying ? Probably he would have found it difficult to say what he was doing. His brain was in a whirl. Perplexity, anger, passionate despair, grief, plucked

in a fierce beaked crowd at his breast, and almost drove him mad.

After a while Hurrish began to speak again—slowly, but with a sort of dogged resolution of getting through at any cost with what he had to say.

“Yis—I kilt him, Morry—I don’t denoy it, why wud I,—now? But I didn’t—mane it—not that way, any way. I was—cumin’ ’long the thrack, an’ he shot at me—from behind ov th’ ould hermitige place, an’ I was mad—an’ made for him. He run, an’ I—after—an’ whin I cum up I hot him—wan on th’ head—only wan—an’ he fell loike a shtone. An’ whin I waited for him to git up agin’ he—niver—did ’t all. An’ after a bit I walked away—an’—sure ye know the rist.”

Yes, Maurice did know the rest. He had no doubt either that what Hurrish told him was the literal truth, the precise way in which the thing had occurred. It had been all a fatality from beginning to end—a black hideous sorrow and crime-laden fatality. Further than this he could not think. A

weight lay upon his head, so that he could not even look up. He dreaded above all other things having to see Hurrish's face again—that ghastly face, upon which fast-coming death had so plainly written its signet. He saw it only too plainly without looking,—felt, indeed, that he should continue to see it always—through all his life, wherever he might be, whatever he might do, perhaps through all eternity, if there *was* any eternity. He could not move his lips to ask forgiveness. The misery, the whole fatality, seemed to him to press to the full as hardly upon himself as upon his victim;—more, seeing that he had to live, whereas Hurrish had only to die! Maurice did not ordinarily undervalue the advantages of living, but he was in a state in which all ordinary feelings ceased, and death seemed an easier thing to face than his present misery. In the end it was Hurrish, therefore, who began again to speak.

“I know you'd just take the two oyes—out ov yer head, if 't wud undo—what ye

dun—Morry, dear, so you needn't—be tellin' me," he said, slowly, subduing as far as possible, for the other's sake, all signs of suffering. "Loife's a har'rd job t' us all, an' no doubt ye felt—druv; so no more—'bout it. I'm thinkin' maybe you'd be bether—out ov this—you'd be bether a dale in Amerikee. You'll have no comfort or intertainmint here t' all I'm 'feard, stead ov which there—so shmart an' cliver as y'ar! Trath, 'tis the Prisdint they'll be makin' ye in no toime!"

Maurice did not respond to the kindly little jest, though the words struck a chord to which his own mind inwardly responded. At present he could not look forward, however, prone as he was to that exercise—could see nothing beyond the fast coming moment, when that door would shut behind him, and Hurrish O'Brien would be left alone to die—to die by his hand. If punishment had fallen upon him, he would probably have braved it out—might very likely have grown indifferent even to the moral side of what he had done; but as it was, the shame and

humiliation of such utter, such absolute forgiveness, bowed him down to the very dust.

At last he lifted his head and showed a ghastly face, as ghastly as the dying man's own, and so they remained for a long minute looking deep into one another's eyes.

At length, in a choked voice, Maurice found words.

"Hurrish, I was mad ! God knows I was mad ! I wish I'd been dead and buried a hundred thousand times over before ever I fired that cursed shot ! Speak to me, Hurrish ! say you'll forgive me," he stammered.

Hurrish's great gaunt face lit up with a wonderful tenderness.

"Is it forgiv ye, me pore buoy," he said passionately. "An' sure wudn't I forgiv ye, an' wilcome, if 'twas twist as much ?"

How much more it could have been he did not stop to think ; neither, in truth, did Maurice. He had risen and stood there, a haggard man, utterly unlike himself,—an image of despair, driven forth like a new Cain from before the face of his victim. He

must go. Yet how *could* he go? There was nothing he could do—no possible atonement that he could make! He must simply walk away, and leave Hurrish there alone—to *die*! Suddenly he turned, and frantically—like one under some fierce constraint, driven forcibly against his will—he staggered blindly towards the door. Arrived there, he paused irresistibly, and looked back—at the cabin, the familiar hearth, the brown walls, the crazy furniture, the broken tawdry bits of crockery, the pots and flyblown prints,—all the poor, homely, untidy little interior. Then he glanced at the bed, and at that wonderful look of pity and forgiveness upon Hurrish's dying face—a look which seemed to flood the whole dreary, sordid poverty of the scene as with the light of another world. The next instant he had turned—he was gone! The cabin, Hurrish, everything had passed away for ever from his sight, and he was face to face with the cold open daylight, with the wide pitiless arch of sky, which seemed to be flashing its clearness into his

very soul, to be proclaiming his sin to the four winds, and inviting all creation to look down upon the traitor, the murderer, going out with the brand of Cain stamped for ever and for ever upon his brow.

The little ridge was almost bare. The men, fortunately perhaps for him, had got tired of waiting, and were gone away. There was no one left except Alley Sheehan, who, seated upon the low wall with her rosary in her hands, kept her eyes fixed immovably upon the door, only waiting for him to come out, that she might return and take up her place beside Hurrish's bedside again.

When he thus appeared—driven violently, as it were, by some irresistible force from within—she instantly averted her eyes, with a rapid involuntary movement of horror, so as to avoid seeing him. Then, when he had moved a little way off, her gaze quietly reverted to the door, and she seemed to be unconscious of any other presence.

He paused, and looked at her as she sat there; moved a step, and paused again.

Should he, must he go, and make no effort to speak to her? have *no* last word at all! He could not, poor wretch. He loved her still!

“Alley!” he said, imploringly.

She gave a sudden start, but did not otherwise move.

“Alley!” he said again, and now in a tone of despairing entreaty.

This time no notice except a slight shiver. Alley was absolutely impassive—her eyes fixed immovably upon the door, her face like the face of a statue. She held her beads in her hands, and was slowly passing them through her fingers, but even her lips hardly moved.

He stood still gazing at her. The iron was eating into his soul as it had not done yet. Shame, bitter, bitter humiliation, a crushing sense of utter powerlessness, were devouring him. He dared not approach her—dared not challenge her attention further than he had done. The little, humble, insignificant girl he had condescended to, had become a terrible

power. She condemned him, and she scorned him. Whether she knew for certain what he had done or not, he could not of course know, but her look was enough. *Hurriish* might forgive him, but there was no forgiveness *here*.

So he remained standing and she sitting, and neither of them spoke again. At last, with a groan, Maurice Brady turned away, and, striking slowly across the ridge, turned to the left, and clambered down the bank into the bohereen, which ran, it will be remembered, considerably below the general level of the ground. The next minute it was as if the earth had opened bodily and swallowed him up!

CHAPTER XVI.

“FOR I ALLAYS SAID HE'D BE A GRAN' MAN.

WHEN he had gone, and the sound of his footsteps had quite died away for the last time, Alley opened the cabin door and went in. Hurrish was lying back white and exhausted, but he opened his eyes as she entered, and turned them on her.

“He's gone, Alley?”

“Yis, he's gone.”

“Did ye spake to him, 'cushla? The poor buoy's very repintint.”

Alley made no answer.

“All's at an' ind 'tween you an' him, I'm afeard?” Hurrish went on regretfully.

A sort of spasm crossed the girl's pale face. Her usually gentle, resigned expression left

it utterly. An odd, wild, savage look, quite unlike any of her own—a survival, perhaps, from some fierce ancestor or ancestress—took its place.

“I hate him!” she said, in a low choked voice. “I wish he war dead! I cud kill him mysel’!”

Hurrish looked quite startled. “Och, Alley, Alley, dear, don’t be sayin’ such things!” he said. “God be good! sure, we must all die! Alley, it frights me t’ hear ye!”

She made no answer, but turned away, and began busying herself about some arrangements for his comfort. Presently old Bridget came back, and made straight for the fireplace, looking round as she did so at the bed and its occupant, as if puzzled as to its meaning. Thady-na-Taggart, who had run away when the crowd had invaded the cabin, now also stole back, with his usual slipshod, noiseless step, and went and crouched down in his former place, Lep making room for him and settling

down again beside him with an air of satisfaction.

After this Hurrish lay for some time quite still and silent, his hand pressed to his chest, his face drawn and white. Presently, hearing a little movement near him, he lifted his head, and saw the three children—the two boys and Katty—who had been allowed to come back on promise of good behaviour, standing together in a small frightened group, a little way from the bed, the six round eyes fixed simultaneously in awed consternation upon his own face.

He lifted his head and beckoned to them. Katty, however, instantly shrank away and hid her face. That strange man lying upon the bed, her daddy ! her startled black eyes and angry pouting mouth seemed to say—No, no ! She knew better than *that* ! She clutched at the rosary, which had been confided to her as a pledge for good behaviour, and held it across her face as a sort of defence, peeping at him suspiciously between the beads.

Hurrish's face lit up with its old familiar smile, or rather the ghost of it.

“Won't Kitteen giv pore dada *wan* kiss? —pore dada that's goin' away an' lavin' her!” he said, coaxingly. “Trath, an' 'tis th' pore dada, sure enough, he's been to you, my dotey,” he added, tenderly.

Convinced apparently by his voice, Katty approached a step nearer, her little face still puckered into a pout of suspicion. Alley lifted her, so that he could kiss her without having to stoop, and the soft round face, with its parted rose-bud lips, and the white haggard one, so piteously gaunt and drawn already, met in a long kiss.

“Ye'll kape her—wid ye—allays. An'—make her a gud gurl—like yersel', Alley?” he said, brokenly.

She bent her head over the child, the determination not to disturb him making the tears spring agonisingly to her eyes.

The two boys came forward, one after the other. Clancy had his stout brown fists in his eyes, and his two red cheeks under

them showed long blistered streaks where the tears had stained them. Andy's blue eyes were wide and tearful too, but it was evident that he hardly realised what had taken place more than Katty did. He had on an old coat of his father's cut down to suit him, which gave him the quaintest grotesque likeness to Hurrish. Lep, feeling evidently that his turn too had come, ran over with a whine to the bed, and, resting his fore-paws upon it, looked up into his master's face. Hurrish patted him and said a word, and, with another whine, the dog ran back to the idiot, nestling close to his side and looking appealingly up into his face, evidently for sympathy.

There was a sound from the chimney-corner, not loud, not much louder than a whisper, but so hoarse and unnatural as to startle the little group around the bed.

"Dyin' an' lavin' me, Hurrish, me son ! Dyin' an' lavin' me !" Old Bridget muttered, rocking herself to and fro with a sort of dreamy misery. "Me beautiful buoy that

they're all jealousin'. Judy O'Malley—an'—Deb. An' to be kilt by a Fagan chilt—that I bad him niver go nigh—dorty little spalpeens, not fit to be whitenin' the flure afther him. An' to think of their darin' to throw shtones at me beautiful buoy, that cud ha' kilt the whole ov thim—aisy—only they got him unbeknownst wid his back turned! But I'll be aven wid thim yit! I'll—I'll——” Her voice died suddenly away in harsh confused murmurs.

Hurrish glanced at Alley. “’Tis *stravagin’* she is, poor sowl,” he whispered. “She’s thinkin’ ov wan toime I was hit wid a shtone whin I was a gossoon, an’ loike to die. I doubt but ’t ’ul go hard wid her!” he added, glancing pitifully over at the gaunt form, rocking itself to and fro, and the harsh vulture-like face, so haggard and piteous in its ragged setting of iron-grey hair.

Alley made a movement, as if she would have gone forward to the old woman; then * she suddenly stopped short, overtaken by her habitual terrors. Almost at the same minute

Father Denahy entered. He had seen the dispensary doctor, so knew what his opinion was. After a few minutes, therefore, he hurried away to prepare for the last offices of the Church, his good-natured prosaic face touching in its unaffected grief.

By the time he had returned, and this ceremony was over, and the doctor too had been back, and had done all that was possible for the wounded man's comfort, it was night, and dark again. Candles had been lit, — a magnificent wax pair, long stored for such a purpose — which stuck, one into an old twisted iron sconce, the other into a whisky bottle, lit up the little room as it had probably never in its existence been lit before.

Alley stood beside the bed as she had sat or stood ever since Hurrish had been brought home, and watched, and watched, as if her very eyes had grown to his face. It seemed to her that her own life too was going away with his, drop by drop, minute by minute, until now there was hardly anything left.

As the night went on, the wind sank, until the silence outside was complete. Thady-na-Taggart and Lep still lay together in a confused heap upon the floor. The children had long ago sobbed themselves to sleep,—even old Bridget had sunk into a heavy stupefied slumber, with her head against the wall. Alley's thoughts were full of strangeness. Sometimes it seemed to her as if it was all a dream: sometimes, that they were floating down one of those strange underground rivers, which disappear so often in the Burren under caverns—floating, floating, slowing along, Hurrish and she together. About three o'clock in the morning, the door behind her opened softly, and Father Denahy came in, and advanced to the other side of the bed, making a sign to her as he did so to take no notice. Hurrish had grown very restless latterly, and kept tossing to and fro, flinging the blankets off, throwing his arms in the air, and talking rapidly to himself in a low excited whisper.

“Hurry thin, captin, hurry up!” they heard him mutter. “Thar they are, as I telled ye, behint of the big rock! Arrah, aisy—aisy an’ you’ll have ’em. Who-ooo! Be glory! but yer th’ gran’ shot!”

Alley went noiselessly forward and straightened the blanket, bending over him to do so. Suddenly his eyes, which had been half closed, opened widely, and he looked her full in the face.

“Is’t thar y’ar shtill?” he whispered, tenderly. “Kiss me thin, alanah, for ’tis the best wife iver pore man had in this world ye’ve been to me, Molly darlint!”

The poor girl’s white face crimsoned agonisingly, and she drew back as if frightened. The priest, however, made her an imperative sign to do as she was told, and accordingly she bent her head down to the bed again. In the interval Hurrish seemed to have forgotten his request, for he lay looking blankly up at the ceiling. Alley was about to lift her head again; then, with a sudden irresistible impulse, she stooped, and kissed

him passionately upon the forehead. Then she drew back so as to be out of range of the candles, and sat down suddenly upon a low stool.

An hour passed, and still they remained there,—Hurrish tossing upon the bed, the other two watching him silently. Now and then Alley would give him some water, or settle the blankets and coverlet. The stillness was absolute, save an occasional long-drawn sound from old Bridget, the gentler breathing of the children from the inner room, a sigh or whispered word from the sick man himself, and now and then the far-off broken mutter of the sea. Thady-na-Taggart had awakened, and drawn himself noiselessly up from the ground, squatting like a toad, or some strange Japanese image, with his knees upon a level with his chin, his wild vacant eyes fixed, as a picture's eyes fix themselves, upon Hurrish's face. The daylight was beginning to struggle in through the small green panes of glass, making the candles look faint and wan. The sick man's life

appeared to be rapidly slipping away,—so rapidly that it seemed to both the watchers that he was nearly gone. Suddenly he opened his eyes, and looked round the room with an air of surprise.

“Whar’s Morry?” he asked, in a voice which sounded almost as strong as ever.

There was no answer—neither Alley nor Father Denahy knowing in the least what to say. He did not seem to require any, however.

“Auch, an’ why wud he shtop?” he went on in a minute, with a sort of self-reproach. “Wid all he’s—to do, an’ all ov thim—wantin’ an’ clamorin’ for him t’onct? Ye’ll tell him I was — axin’ — for him, — but that I knew he’d ha’ cum—if he cud. An’ ye’ll guv him—me blessin’—pore Hurrish O’Brien’s blessin’,—an’—tell him I—was proud for to think ov him,—cum to what he is,—riz up here—jist a bit of a gossoon at me knee,—that nobody else—thought nothink ov. But ’tis only what—I espected,—for I—allays—said—he’d—be a—Gran’—man!”

He fell back, breathed a few short gasping breaths, and everything was over.

Father Denahy went forward after a minute’s pause and closed the sightless eyes ; then, kneeling down beside the bed, recited a few prayers. He expected to hear another voice join in at the responses, but there was none, till poor Thady, springing suddenly to his feet with a cry like a dog giving tongue, broke in with some sort of strange inarticulate idiot’s Latin of his own. When the priest, getting up, looked around in some surprise for Alley, he saw that she had fallen a little way from him, and was lying in a dead faint, with her face against the floor.

CONCLUSION.

Is there anything more to add? A few words, perhaps. Maurice Brady got off to America, where for some time he led a rather uncomfortable life amongst his compatriots, who persisted, rightly or wrongly, in looking askance at him, and regarding him as a traitor to the national cause, and the assassin of his own best friend. In the end this unamiability proved an advantage to him, however, rather than otherwise, since, instead of wasting his energies and talents exclusively upon the comparatively barren field of politics, it caused him to carry them into the more fertile one of business. He had a small sum of money to start with, the remains of what his brother had had in bank, and this, under his shrewd and

intelligent management, became the prolific parent of what promises in time to be a large fortune. He made his way, shortly after arriving in America, to San Francisco,—drawn there, perhaps, on account of its being the farthest attainable point from the shores of Ireland,—got a place in a large dry-goods store, where his talents and smartness were speedily appreciated; and so well did he prosper, that within the last two years he has set up a similar one on his own account at Sacramento, which, according to the report of a wandering compatriot, is fast drawing to itself the chief fashionable patronage of that important place. He is also said to be married, or about to be married, to the daughter of one of its wealthier citizens, but this last item lacks, it must be avowed, absolute confirmation.

Of our other acquaintances nothing equally brilliant is, I fear, to be recorded. Mr O'Brien is still at Donore; still carrying on a hopeless struggle with fate; still hoping against hope for some fresh turn in the hitherto inextri-

cable dead-lock ; still perpetually appealed to by Mrs O'Brien to leave the whole wretched thing in the hands of an agent, and to join her and her daughters at Brighton. Young Thomond has been appointed to a new ship, and when last I heard of him, was cruising about somewhere in the Antipodes. He is as authoritative as ever about Ireland, never failing to demonstrate convincingly to any one who will listen to him, the only method by which, in his experienced opinion, to cut the gordian knot in which its affairs have been so long, and are still to all appearances so hopelessly entangled.

As for our humbler friends, to them, as to most of us, the recurrent years have brought a mingled crop—good and ill, disappointment and satisfaction. From the day of Hurrish's death, Lep and Thady-na-Taggart struck up a sort of antique friendship, and have rarely since been seen apart. It has never been quite clear to their numerous friends and admirers which of the two partners is the leader, but between them they manage to

lead that comfortable and not undignified existence which, in Ireland, is the lot of those who throw themselves with unbounded confidence upon the benevolence of their neighbours.

Hurrish's memory is not at all forgotten at Tubbamina, where his feats of strength are still boastfully recited, and his triumph over the law and the "polis" constantly spoken of in high terms of commendation and approval. It is not, however, exclusively upon these grounds that his fame rests. Whenever any one for miles round finds the burden—whether of life or of "pittaytees"—too heavy to be borne, Hurrish O'Brien's friendly face and strong willing arms rise as a sort of meteor from the past to mock the woes of the present. Whenever any lady or gentleman is refused the trifle of assistance they request, his name is instantly, and as a rule violently, flung in the teeth of the churlish refuser. "Augh, thin, Hurrish O'Brien, dacent man, iv he were 'live, wudn't ha' lit me be putt out

'pon th' road wet an' hungry this cauld noight!"—promises, by dint of repetition, to become a local proverb. There is a sort of subtle aroma of kindness and goodwill which is often stronger than any one single good deed that can be recorded of its possessor, and something of this sort still clings, and promises for a while longer to cling, about his homely memory.

Old Bridget did not long survive him. She continued very rambling and incoherent, and it was never quite clear to those about her whether she knew that her son was dead, or merely imagined him to be absent from home. Sometimes she was violent and difficult to manage, but for the most part she sat silently all day long over the fire upon her creepy-stool, actively engaged in stirring the pot, and equally assiduously whether there was anything in it or not. One day, while thus engaged, she suddenly fell back, the iron ladle still tenaciously clutched in her hand, was taken up rigid, and never spoke again. After her

death—which occurred in the course of the month which followed her seizure — Alley Sheehan joined her sister in the convent in Galway, and, after the usual period of probation, became a nun, and is there at the present time. She is very far from unhappy—in fact, may be described as actually happy. Her gentle soul, too tremulous for a world so full of harsh surprises, finds its repose in the fulfilment of a small and very simple routine of well-defined daily duties, and its happiness in the prayers which her Church so humanely and benevolently allows to be offered up for those who have passed beyond the reach of even the tenderest hands. Little Katty — by a special permission of the mother superior — was allowed to accompany her, and is at this moment the idol and unspeakable torment of all the sisters, but is not regarded by them as at all likely to add a fresh recruit to their numbers.

As for the two boys, they are rapidly growing up, and Andy is more than ever the “moral” of his father, and promises with

years to attain to the same goodly proportions. Perhaps by the time they have come to years of discretion, Ireland will have entered upon a new departure, though what precise form that departure will take, and whence its brightest hopes are to come, it is a little difficult, it must be owned, just now to discern. Enough perhaps that there are elements in it which have nothing, fortunately, to say to politics—of any complexion. Kindliness, faith, purity, are good spirits which may steer a boat through even as rough waters as any that it has travelled through, and bring it into safe anchorage at last. Thus far we may allow ourselves to hope; the rest must be left to—"Time, the nurse and breeder of all good."

THE END.

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